

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 22 – The Wild West Show

The next question was, 'How do you get all of the Pentagon Brass to the Wild West Show'? Circus Vargas was the answer to that question. All 3 of the amigos hit on that about the same time, or perhaps they were visiting before. Anyway, Circus Vargas comes to town and there are free tickets everywhere. The catch was that only got you in the gate; in this instance that would get you in to see the performance. Slick, except the cowboys and Indians would be using real bullets. This was most definitely a one-time thing. And to make sure we didn't get some poor enlisted sap who was bringing his kids, we'd have 2 performances, one for the officers and one for the enlisted. Officers would natural come first in deference to their rank. We had a special seating area just for the Joint Chiefs, best seats in the house, right on the '50-yard line'.

I was assigned to put on my Paladin Suit and be the Master of Ceremonies. In my line of work you didn't want to be noticed. You just wanted to be another faceless person in the crowd. Not too short not too tall, nor too thin or fat. You wanted to be just another schmuck on his way to work, or wherever. Plain clothes, no facial hair nondescript sneakers... So here I was standing in front of a crowd of 5,000 officers and their families dressed like Paladin and trying to make a bunch of old men and some Indians seem interesting. I didn't look like Richard Boone and I had nickel-plated guns with Ivory grips.

Ladies and Gentlemen and children of all ages, the show is about to begin, I announced.

The Lone Ranger (2 spaced gunshots) A fiery horse with a speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty 'Hi-Yo, Silver!' (multiple gunshots) The Lone Ranger! Hi-Yo, Silver, Away! With his faithful Indian companion Tonto the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early west. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. The Lone Ranger rides again, I announced.

With this announcement Derek came out on a white horse wearing his Dad's double holster rig and the 2 nickel-plated Vaqueros filled with blanks. He rode around the arena with Travis all dressed up like Tonto. They exited and 6 riders entered, Ron, Clarence, Gary, Damon, John and Derek, having done a 'fast change'.

Six Texas Rangers rode in the sun, I continued. *Six men of justice rode into an ambush with death for all but one.* Some of the Apaches dressed as outlaws jumped up and fired blanks at the men with all of them falling gingerly from their horses.

One lone survivor lay on the trail, I continued. Travis reentered and 'found' Derek. *Found there by Tonto, the brave Indian Tonto, he lived to tell the tale.* At this point Travis put Derek's arm in a sling and tossed a canvas over the 'bodies'. Removing the canvas revealed 6 freshly dug 'graves'. "Six graves were put there to hide from the outlaws that one man lived to fight." Derek straps back on his Dad's double rig, dons the mask and holds a bullet in the air. Travis whistles to the well-trained white horse and it

runs to his side. *A mask to disguise him, a great Silver stallion, and thus began his fame.* The fellas mount up and exit the arena, bringing the house down.

Crap like this went on for over an hour. I even got into the act with 'The Lone Ranger' narrating one of Paladin's encounters with a bad man. We even made a big show of the Indian and 'Calvary' loading their guns leading up to the Grand Finale, the battle of the Little Big Horn. John made a passable Marshal Dillon and we did a shortened Gun-smoke episode. It actually wasn't a bad show, even if I say so myself. Everyone had worked very hard for this single performance. Now the 1,000 Apaches, most dressed as Indians and some, the 'losers', dressed as Calvary began to fill the arena. They loaded their guns and the 'Calvary' mounted horses on the far side of the arena. We had Gary dressed up as George Custer wearing a blond wig. We didn't have any authentic 1873 Trapdoor Springfield carbines, but they screwed that up a lot in the movies so we hoped the crowd wouldn't notice.

George A. Custer's 7th Cavalry had Springfield carbines and Colt .45 revolvers; the Lakota and Cheyenne Indians had a variety of long arms, including repeaters. But were the weapons used on June 25, 1876, the deciding factor in the famous battle? I asked. It is well-known that Custer's men each brought a trapdoor Springfield and a Colt .45 to the Little Bighorn that June day in 1876. Identification of the Indian weapons is more uncertain. Participants claimed to have gone into battle with a plethora of arms – bows and arrows, ancient muzzleloaders, breechloaders and the latest repeating arms. Bows and arrows played a part in the fight. Some warriors said they lofted high-trajectory arrows to fall among the troopers while remaining hidden behind hill and vale. The dead soldiers found pin cushioned with arrows, however, were undoubtedly riddled at close range after they were already dead or badly wounded. The long range at which most of the fighting occurred did not allow the bow and arrow a prominent role.

At this point in the show all of the 'Calvary' were down and the 'Indians' were reloading their arms (with live ammo) against a possible attack by other 'Calvary', all of which I explained to the audience. They were enchanted and enthralled and there was a lot of whispering and pointing of fingers. The Apaches had been instructed to only shoot the men and try to avoid hitting the women and children. The audience was large and it would be a formidable task to only hit the men. All of a sudden, 'Crazy Horse' turned on the crowd and fired taking out the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

Those Indians had their lever action Winchesters plus the M16's. They had salvaged enough for the entire group with their raids against the Army back in New Mexico. At first everyone was very successful in shooting only the men. They also managed to take out all the LEO's brought in to provide crowd control. And then a woman, I presume a female officer, pulled out a M9 and began to return fire. That did it! Any woman standing got shot. It wasn't many women, but to read later press accounts, we'd killed 10,000 women alone out of a crowd that numbered less than 20,000.

There was screaming and whimpering and wailing and gnashing of teeth, I presume. We loaded up our livestock and got the hell out of Manassas and Virginia. We literally

scattered to the three winds with some heading north, others west and some to the south. East didn't give us many options. One newspaper actually got it right. The Washington Times reported that 'several' women were killed or injured when a female Army Lt. Colonel returned fire on the 'terrorists'. 'Several' turned out to be 7 killed (including the Lt. Colonel) and about 20 wounded. Not really too bad out of a crowd that numbered about 5,000 men, 5,000 women and 8,000 children, none of whom was injured.

So now we were labeled 'terrorists'. We weren't terrorists', we were insurgents attempting to put down a palace coup. Hmm, I'll bet that's what a lot of those Iraqi terrorists claimed, huh?

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father, and refuse thy name; Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy; Thou art thyself though, not a Montague. What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot, Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part Belonging to a man. O! Be some other name: What's in a name? that which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet; So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd, Retain that dear perfection which he owes Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name; And for that name, which is no part of thee, Take all myself.

The point was the hierarchy at the Pentagon was dead and the lady President was dead and the federal prosecutor, Rudi Giuliani was now President. Giuliani had a clean slate from which he could rebuild the country, if he chose to. It turns out that the military had Rudi in a veritable stranglehold and he hadn't been able to figure any way out. He might be the Commander-in-Chief, but he was a New Yorker and didn't own a gun. The President didn't take long to act. He branded us outlaws but for some reason we didn't get on the FBI's list of 'Most Wanted'. There was no federal reward like there was for Osama bin Laden. Outlaws, yes, but seemingly not wanted. Then again there really wasn't anyone who could identify us was there? None of us had gotten close enough to the crowd that they could be absolutely certain who we were. Nevertheless, I put my Paladin Suit away, just in case.

With our having done as much as we could to save the country, we all returned to New Mexico. Those Apaches still had a few more soldiers they wanted to tackle; the 5 amigos were done. Yes sir, when I pinned on that tin star, I became an official amigo. However, for the sake of appearances The Three Amigos and I agreed that I'd change identities and become Marshall Dillon. According to an article on TV westerns in Time Magazine (March 30, 1959), Arness stood 6' 7", weighed 235 lbs, and had chest-waist-hips measurements of 48-36-36. Arness, who is still living, was made an Honorary United States Marshal, "In recognition of his unique contribution to the Image and Traditions of the US Marshal's Service"

Remember me? I was 5'11" tall, and weighed in around 165, well, call it 170, I was older now. Well anyway, I was taller than Doc Adams (5'8") and Miss Kitty (5'5"), but I was shorter than Chester, Festus, Quint, Newly and Thad. Doc died of a heart attack in 1980

and Miss Kitty of AIDS-related throat cancer in 1989. The Three Amigos next came around and said that I was a proper Marshal, but a little too short to be Matt Dillon. They suggested I go by the handle of William "Bill" Tilghman, a real deputy US marshal from the Oklahoma territory. Gary said he was going to adopt the pseudonym of Henry "Heck" Thomas. Ron was going to go by Chris Madsen and Clarence was going to be Bass Reeves. I wondered aloud if we could pull off a scam like that and Gary said that the problem with people was that they didn't pay any attention to history. He then quoted a man named George Santayana and pointed out that, *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*

I pigeonholed Ritchie and asked about papers. He told me that he could handle everything except credit cards and putting the fake passport numbers into the government's database. He suggested that some of the data could be loaded into the City of Roswell's computer ready for upload when the Internet came back up. He said that we had several dummy Amex accounts and he'd slip in and change the names to reflect our new handles. All of which could only happen when telephone service was restored and our T-3 line was active. So far as the credit cards themselves, he had blanks.

"Ritchie, I put off having this talk with you for a very long time," I said. "Every time I have a need, you fill it. How do you manage that?"

"We've been together a long time, boss," he said. "Early on when I was helping set all of your alternative identities I realized that it was a whole lot easier to do many than few. Then if you wanted some papers really quick, I could slip into a database, make a change and you'd have genuine fake papers. I scouted around and got birth certificates for children about your age who died in infancy. Then I built a whole set of legends."

"Ritchie, the Three Amigos have suggested some new identities and I'm pretty sure the names are all dead US Deputy Marshals from 100 years ago," I explained.

"Boss, I was looking at the badge they gave me and it's genuine," Ritchie pointed out.

"There's got to be a whole lot more to The Three Amigos than they've let on," I suggested. "Did you notice how they all had their own M16A3's with suppressors and a lot of things that a guy from California shouldn't have been able to get his hands on?"

"No, I just concentrate on computers, boss, you know me," he smiled. "But if you give me the names, I'll generate the papers for you and get them all in the databases when I can. Just use the credit cards for identification, but pay cash for everything. By the way did they come up with a name for me?"

"Not that I recall," I told him. "But you don't do a lot of field work, do you?"

"Nah, there was nothing to delivering a semi load of Stringers and 1,000 Apache Indians halfway across the country," he muttered.

“I’ll talk to Gary,” I told him.

“Gary, Ritchie feels left out that you didn’t give him an alias,” I explained.

“Tell him he’s William S. Tough,” Gary said without batting an eye. “Tough was Buffalo Bill Cody’s commanding officer during the Civil War and a full-fledged US Marshal out of Kansas later.”

“Where did you get the badges?” I asked, “Ritchie says they’re real.”

“I got them from Marshal Marshall Thomas,” Gary laughed.

Must be an inside joke, I didn’t get it. Over a period of time, about a year, things slowly began to return to ‘normal’. The Internet and the phones finally came back up and power was restored. Ritchie worked some magic and we all received genuine replacement credit cards from Amex, Discover and Visa in the now partially restored mail service. After that, we received updated ID cards from the US Marshal Service, and even ‘replacement’ Passports. Around home I still went by William Rogers so as not to confuse the girls. I’d gotten used to the western attire and frequently wore my badge. We’d managed a trip to Laredo and I picked up a rig like the one Gary wore. I bought a new crossdraw holster because it had been a bitch getting the paladin on the one I wore with the Paladin rig.

It was late in the year of 2007 and everything was going along smoothly. Rudi unsus-pended the Constitution, recalled Congress, and appointed a new Cabinet and Service Chiefs. He then issued a blanket Presidential pardon for everyone who had participated in the ‘period of uncertainty’ as he called it. Travis and some representatives of the Apache nation headed to Washington and got to see Rudi by dropping the term ‘Last Battle of the Little Bighorn’. In no time at all the Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs were seeing what they might possibly be able to do to ‘right a dreadful wrong’. Nothing as it turned out because there wasn’t enough open land in Arizona to give to the Apache.

Then Congress got involved and used a lot of government owned desert land in Arizona to set up a new reservation for the Apache Nation there in Mescalero. The word was that Congress was more than a little po’d over Condi or Dick suspending the Constitution and Rudi ending up as President. There must have been some deals made because Rudi kept his job and they approved all of his appointments. The Roswell Board of Education had resumed operating the schools once they had power and were running them year around until everyone got back on track. As I said, everything was going smoothly.

We received transfer papers in due course assigning the 5 of us to the US Marshal’s office there in Roswell as an ‘undercover’ team. We took the papers to the Deputy in charge and he said it must be really undercover because he hadn’t heard a thing about it. I told him that we’d be operating our little operation out of the trailer park down at the

missile silo. If he had any questions about that, he should contact William Rogers, the owner of the place. The Deputy was new in town and had no idea who we were.

Sometimes Deputy Marshals wear suits, like in the movie, and sometimes they don't. We were a 'deep cover' operation and naturally we didn't. In fact we were dressed all rather conventionally with western cut shirts, denims, boots and hats. You couldn't distinguish us from any other of several thousand ranchers in the area. I explained to the Deputy that our immediate boss was a Marshal by the name of Bill Tough and that he was in charge of our operation and reported only to the guy at the top. If you're going to run a colossal bluff, go big. The Deputy naturally wanted to know what we were involved in and I told him it was so hush-hush that even the Chief US Marshal was sworn to deny the existence of our little group.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 23 – The Visit

Yes sir, I'll have to tell you that everything was going along fine for a few months there in late 2007 and early 2008. Anything that was broke got fixed, the Apaches gave us back our weapons and the silo got restocked. And then the Chief US Marshal showed up in Roswell. The local Deputy who I'd been referring to happened to mention to the Chief US Marshal that he'd met his undercover team. The Chief Marshal denied any knowledge of our existence just like I'd told the Deputy he would. But, the Chief Marshal wasn't about to let it go at that, he figured he had a bunch of imposters and intended to rout them out. To top everything off, the man was a student of Marshal History and when he heard the names, he was ready to make arrests.

"I understand that you are Deputy US Marshal William "Bill" Tilghman," the Chief Marshal said.

"That's not my real name Marshal, it's an assumed identity for this operation," I told him.

"And these other fellas, Henry "Heck" Thomas, Chris Madsen, Bass Reeves and William S. Tough," he asked, "Are those assumed identities, too?"

"Absolutely," I replied. "You know as well as I do that those are famous names from US Marshal History."

"How does it happen that I have an undercover team of 5 Deputy Marshals and know nothing about it?" he asked.

"Four Deputy Marshals and one US Marshal," I said. "And I guess that the reason you don't know about it is that he didn't want you to know."

"Are you referring to the Attorney General?" he asked.

I couldn't bluff that one out so I responded in the negative by shaking my head and using my right index finger to point upward.

"You can't be serious," he said. "The President?"

I maintained my demeanor and didn't respond, allowing the Chief US Marshal to ASSUME that we were on a special project for the President, Rudi Giuliani. Another one of the amigos half-baked ideas, which they took from an old TV show called 'The Wild, Wild West'. James West and Artemus Gordon are two agents of President Grant who take their splendidly appointed private train through the west to fight evil. Gary said it was really appropriate because James West, played by Robert Conrad, had more gadgets than Houdini. I was beginning to think that The Three Amigos were just naturally dishonest.

"Well, I'll have to look into this," he said. I just smiled and he departed abruptly.

“Ritchie, I need you,” I called out.

“Yeah, boss, what’s up?” he asked.

“Get The Three Amigos in here on the double, we’re up to our butt in alligators,” I said.

“What’s wrong now?” Gary demanded.

“Oh, just the Chief US Marshal paying me a visit,” I replied.

“Did you run the ‘Wild, Wild West scam on him?” Gary asked.

“Yes, and he said he was going to check it out,” I replied.

“Ritchie, do you have the number for the White House switchboard?” Gary asked.

“I can get it,” Ritchie replied.

“Do it,” Gary smiled that evil smile of his.

Ritchie can back in a minute and gave Gary the number. Gary picked up the phone and dialed the number.

“White House switchboard?” Gary confirmed. “You tell President Giuliani that Paladin is on the phone. No, I’m not kidding, you just tell him that Paladin from the Last Battle of the Little Big Horn is on the phone and wants to talk to him. Sure, I’ll wait.”

“Mr. President? You don’t know me. Let’s just say that I’m Paladin from the Last Battle of the Little Big Horn,” Gary said.

“Travis?” Gary said. “Yeah, worked together with him on a little Wild West Show back in Manassas. Yeah, but it couldn’t be helped, she shot first. Yes, we heard about the Presidential pardon, that’s not why I’m calling. Why am I calling? It’s like this President Giuliani, five of us fellas from that little fracas settled down here in Roswell, New Mexico. We made ourselves US Marshals or Deputy Marshals and are running a little undercover operation here.”

There was a long pause and Gary’s ears started to turn red on the edges. Ron pointed to Gary’s ears and shook his head. I didn’t understand but the next time Gary spoke, his voice was a little higher.

“Now listen you WOP SOB,” Gary said, “We took care of Condi Rice and the Joint Chiefs for you and we can take care of you, if needs be,” Gary spoke forcefully. “That’s better, and yes I was,” Gary said after a lengthy pause. “Thank you. We’re not doing anything particularly illegal Mr. President, we’re just trying to maintain law and order in

the Wild, Wild West. Yes, we made ourselves Marshals and we're not looking for trouble, may I suggest that you back our play? Why not, you're the President and you can make us legitimate US Marshals or Deputy Marshals? Then we can run around and arrest bad guys and make you look good. We'll be your James West and Artemus Gordon's. No, I didn't go to West Point and yes the crest is real silver. No, I'm not going to wear the Paladin Suit anymore, but I might wear the guns. Yes, ok, the Chief US Marshal will give you the names and you just tell him we're legitimate. What do you mean sworn in? Yes, we have real badges and genuine ID. How did we manage it is for me you know and for you to guess. Oh all right, he can swear us in. Goodbye and thank you Mr. President."

I noticed that Gary's ears were no longer red and he had a smirk on his face.

"Well fellas, the Chief US Marshal will be back in a few days and swear us in officially," Gary said. "He said that the pardons were blanket and covered everything we did up to this point in time."

"What did he say when you called him a WOP SOB?" Ron asked.

"He got a little po'd, so I had to listen for a while," Gary said. "He wanted to know if I was the famous murderer of the Mafioso's. I admitted it and he said he'd pardon all of my actions because he'd had one hell of a time bringing John Gotti to justice."

"What gives you the right to confess for me?" I asked.

"What's the difference, you're pardoned," Gary responded. "And Ritchie will be a full US Marshal and the rest of us will be Ritchie's Deputies. And we can run around like Robert Conrad and Ross Martin, who died on July 3, 1981 in Ramona, California from a heart attack by the way, and save everyone from the bad guys."

This Gary had some big ones calling Rudi Giuliani a WOP SOB and threatening to kill him. Just threatening to kill the President could land you in jail or a mental institution. I wondered if the President was just shining Gary on or if we'd really get to be US Marshals. That would be quite the reversal in roles, going from a bad man to a good guy. But, I was a good guy and I just administered justice in a much more efficient and permanent way and made a couple bucks in the process. The scumbags of the world were the people who used our system of justice to avoid justice by looking for loopholes in the law and tiny missteps by law enforcement officers. After some guy had been arrested a few times he knew the Miranda warning better than the cops who usually read it from a card so they didn't forget one little word and accidentally let the scumbag walk on a technicality.

And then I got to wondering if I wanted to BE a LEO? The police officers put their lives on the line every day. Hell, they'd stop some guy for speeding and get blown away. That part was easy; US Marshals and Deputies didn't arrest guys for speeding. What US Deputy Marshal's usually did was protect the federal judiciary, apprehend federal fugi-

tives, protect witnesses, house and transport prisoners, manage seized assets, serve criminal processes and handle Special Operations and Programs. Yeah that was us. The Roswell Special Marshal's Group doing Special Operations and Programs, whatever the hell they were. Probably anything they needed to be if we were working for the President. So Giuliani had a hard time busting John Gotti, huh? Well, maybe he'd think it over and come up with a good use for 5 worn out slightly dishonest old men.

"Gary talked to the President today," I told Stacy.

"Yeah right," she laughed out loud. "Called him on the phone and probably called him a WOP SOB."

"How did you know he called him a WOP SOB?" I asked, "Did you talk to Ritchie?"

"Get out of here," she said, "He did no such thing."

"I swear to God and you KNOW how risky that is," I replied.

"He really called the President and called him names?" her eyes got wide.

"So help me honey, he did," I nodded. "Anyway supposedly we're going to end up as US Marshals or Deputy Marshals."

"I can see it all now," she laughed, "Paladin with a badge."

"I can't wear the Paladin suit anymore, Gary bargained that away," I explained, "In exchange for a full pardon."

"So who are you going to be now?" she wanted to know.

"At home I'll be William Rogers and on the road I'll be Deputy US Marshal William "Bill" Tilghman," I replied.

"Are you schizophrenic?" she asked.

"More like multiple personality disorder," I chuckled.

"The girls are all at school and won't be home for a while," she raised her eyebrows.

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"Hey boss, we've been summoned to Washington," Ritchie said.

This came about 2 weeks after the Chief US Marshal had reappeared and sworn us in. He'd shaken all of our hands and said it was good we were aboard, although he'd have

preferred it if the President had kept him better informed. Ritchie told him now that everything was out in the open, he talk to Rudi about it, but he couldn't make any promises.

"The Chief Marshal just left," I said. "I thought he told me he was headed to Los Angeles, San Francisco and then Hawaii."

"Not him, boss," Ritchie said, "The Boss, Boss, Giuliani, himself."

"What does he want?" I inquired.

"Well, I was sitting there trying to tap into one of the NSA computers when Amy tells me I have a call," Ritchie began. "I had a mouth full of tea and picked up the phone and mumbled, Ritchie. 'This is Rudi,'" the voice says, "'Is this Bill Tough?'"

"Man I liked to ruin my computer with tea," Ritchie says, "Anyway I say yes sir and he says, *Get your team together and be at the airport in 3 hours, a VC-20 will be there to pick you up. Oh, and tell Paladin to wear the suit and guns.* And, he hangs up."

"When did he call?" I asked.

"Half hour, 45 minute ago," Ritchie says.

"Either put on a suit or some western duds, Ritchie we're going to see the President," I snickered. "Oh and get The Three Amigos ready to go."

"They're waiting in the pickup, boss," Ritchie said.

About 2 hours later we arrived at Roswell airport and watched a VC-20 land. It must have radioed for fuel because a fuel truck was waiting. While they attended to the aircraft, a big guy in a business suit got out and sauntered over to where we were sitting in the pickup.

"Samuel Wayne, Secret Service," the guy say, "One of you Tough?"

"We're all Tough," Ron growled.

"Bill Tough?" the agent asked.

"That's me," Ritchie replied.

"Get in the plane," he says.

We grabbed our overnight bags and walked over to the plane and boarded. A bit later the fuel truck pulled away and the engines started. Off we went headed to Washington. I was beginning to wonder if Giuliani had maybe changed his mind. The Steward offered us drinks and Ron and Clarence ordered coffee. Gary hesitated for a moment or two

and then ordered coffee, too. I didn't know that Gary didn't like to fly and in years gone by had never gotten on a plane sober. It was well after dark when we arrived at Reagan Airport and we loaded in a limo to go to the White House. When we arrived, Wayne relieved us of our hardware. He stood in front of me with his palm out. It finally dawned on me what he wanted and I handed him the derringer.

We were shown into the Oval Office and Giuliani comes around the desk and greeted us. He motioned for the steward to get coffee and told us to take a seat. Then he looked me right in the eye and asked, "Are you Paladin?"

"I should dress like this if I was Matt Dillon?" I asked.

"The voice isn't the same as I remember from the phone," he said.

"That's because it was me that called you names," Gary chuckled.

"And you are?" Giuliani asked.

"Real name is Gary Olsen but I'm using Heck Thomas these days," Gary replied. "And the tall handsome man is Clarence Rawlings aka Bass Reeves. That short pudgy guy is Ron Green aka Chris Madsen. You know Paladin aka Bill Tilghman and the wimpy guy is Ritchie aka Bill Tough. Ron, Clarence and I are The Three Amigos."

"What's that?" Giuliani asks, "A rock group from the '60's?"

"Watch your mouth," Ron snapped.

"So Ritchie, you're in charge of this bunch?" Giuliani asked.

"Only on paper," Ritchie replied, "Paladin and Olsen really run the gang."

Ritchie, you should be more careful with your words, partner. Here we are, sitting in the Oval Office talking to the President of the United States and you call us a gang? I'm definitely going to leave you in the office for this gig, whatever it is.

"What can we do for you Mr. President?" I asked. "You didn't bring us all the way to Washington just so Ron could bust your nose did you?"

"I have a reputation as a real law and order guy," Giuliani said. "Sometimes, however, the law is cumbersome."

"We don't do contract killings," I said. "By the way are we getting paid for this?"

"I have a little slush fund that I can dip into from time to time," Giuliani replied. "But my sources tell me that you are a wealthy man."

“The amigos aren’t wealthy,” I replied.

“\$100,000 a head per job,” the President offered.

“Depends on the job,” I said. “Make it a sliding scale from \$50 thousand to \$250,000 and you have a deal.”

“Who decides how much a job is worth?” Giuliani asks.

“I will,” I told him. “I have some experience in contract work.”

“Here’s what I need you to do...”

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 24 – The New Contracts

Some folks can read and others pretend. I had explicitly said that, ‘we don’t do contract killings’. So, now we were hit men with badges? I figured I’d value a job for what it was worth and then apply a sliding scale to reflect the danger involved. I was the only individual with a lot of experience in these matters and as wild as The Three Amigos were, they might just be in over their heads. Although they did do a pretty good job at Camp David, I had to give them that.

The President had a problem involving the UN. That wasn’t surprising; the UN had sat on its butt through some of the darker days recently and then complained about the ‘wanton slaughter’ that had occurred at 3rd Manassas. Those buttocks at the UN were bound and determined to disarm America, with whatever means it took. They referred to us as a brash young society implying, perhaps, that we needed a diaper change. What was it Gary told me that some guy had as a signature at his favorite website? Something about the French having 35 Liberation Days? Gordon Sinclair had been right and it was good that he hadn’t lived to see what had happened. When the US really needed help, where were the Brits, Aussies and Canadians? Live Free or Die.

The President wanted us to cause problems within the new Tripartite Pact. Since before George Bush had decided to invade Iraq, the French, German and Russians had done everything within their power to block any UN participation in the war in Iraq. Then when the palace coup was in full swing, Condi had reversed her former boss’s position and perhaps her own and had pulled the troops out, perhaps presuming that the UN would step in. But, the UN couldn’t, even if they wanted to; there was that tsunami in the Indian Ocean that had a death toll approaching 200,000 and they couldn’t chew gum and rub their tummy at the same time. With the world aid reaching \$3 Billion, the countries didn’t have any money left to step into Iraq and fill the vacuum our departure had left. And, all this time later, they were still finding bodies.

Britain and the other coalition partners had pulled their contingents out of Iraq at the first hint the US was considering a pullout. That bailed Tony Blair out big time and these days Britain was mum on most UN issues. This left the Tripartite in effective control of the UN. They couldn’t get anything done, the US vetoed it, but neither could the US get anything done. Giuliani’s hand had been about eye level when he’d said, “I’ve had it up to here.” Since this was our first official job as a team, it seemed reasonable to set the fee at \$100,000 a head. There wasn’t a significant danger factor except just being in New York, hence no danger coefficient. Thank God the Internet was back up.

“Ritchie, I need something.”

“Yeah boss, what?” he responded, his eagerness evident.

“We have some S&W .357 Magnum’s and some .40 S&W autos, right?” I checked.

“Rog,” he said, “Which do you want?”

“Both with leather, 4 extra 10 round magazines per and 4 speed loaders per,” I listed our needs. “Miami Vice on the auto and belt on the S&W’s.”

“Make that 48 and meet me at La Guardia,” he said. “I’ll page you when I have the airline and flight number and you can meet me.”

“Sooner is better,” I said. “And send Derek and Al to deliver the stuff and tell them to pack for a couple of weeks,” I instructed. “We’re going to need help on this one.”

“Ok, ok, 24 but no sooner,” he replied and hung up on me.

“24 hours fellas, so let’s start getting organized the first thing in the morning. Pick up 6 digital cameras,” I ‘suggested’. “I’ll pick up a laptop and an inkjet printer. And somebody get a couple of boxes of size medium latex gloves.”

“Tomorrow we get everything we need,” I said. “Al and Derek are coming to help. Get familiar with the area around the UN building. Anybody know anything about surveillance gear?”

“What do you want, we’ll figure it out?” Gary replied first.

“Directional surveillance mikes and micro cassette recorders,” I replied.

“We going to be carrying?” Ron asked.

“S&W model 686P 357 Magnums with 7 rounds and SiG 229’s .40 S&W plus 4 HKS587A speed loaders and 4 extra magazines,” I explained. “We need to get you to a tailor I know and polish the country look. How about Western cut suits?”

“We need dress hats and boots,” Ron said.

“It’s a one-stop custom tailor shop,” I said, “With 24-hour fitting and 48-hour delivery.”

As US Marshals we wouldn’t have to mess with the Sullivan Law that New York had. And, if they tried to roust us, we’d charge them with obstruction, referring to the NYPD. In NYC, you need a permit to even own a handgun, or a federal badge and ID. The evening of the next day, Derek and Al showed up and we went to the hotel. They had Badges, ID and more importantly hardware. Ritchie swore them in. We needed more time on the suits, so I sent them to the tailor early in the morning. There really wasn’t any rush; the President had given us a month. Two days later, we checked in with the 17th Precinct and told them we’d be doing a special op in their precinct but that it was a simple surveillance job.

“A couple of those boys look a little old to be on active duty,” the desk sergeant said.

“Makeup,” I laughed.

“You carrying?” he asked.

“Sig 229 backup piece and S&W .357,” I replied. “But our main tools this trip are digital cameras and directional mikes. We’ll be in the general area of the UN.”

“Guess I’d better let the Captain know,” he said.

“By all means, Sergeant,” I said, “We’d like to have a good working relationship (BS) with you guys that put it on the line on a daily basis. So you will know us, we’ll be the tourists in western cut suits and 10-gallon hats doing our best not to look like Clint Eastwood (*Coogan’s Bluff*-1968). And sergeant we’re from New Mexico, not Texas.”

I overheard him commenting to another cop as I walked away. “Well at least they’re not FBI or DEA.” Next, I checked us in with the US Marshal’s office in Manhattan and told them that if they had any questions to call the Chief Marshal. I specifically did not discuss our assignment with NYPD or the New York office. Ron and Gary (team Alpha) got the Germans, Derek and Al the Russians (team Bravo) and Clarence and I took the French (team Charlie). Ritchie had cracked their security computers and had photos of each of the 3 country’s UN staff. Plus, we had Government Issue handy talkies. However, we weren’t going to be wearing those fancy suits for our actual surveillance activities.

The Soviet Union’s Committee for State Security [KGB] dissolved along with the USSR in late 1991. However, most of its assets and activities have continued through several separate organizations. The Foreign Intelligence Service [SVR] was the first element of the KGB to establish a separate identity [as the Central Intelligence Service - Centralnaya Sluzhbza Razvedkyin [CSR] in October 1991, incorporating most of the foreign operations, intelligence-gathering and intelligence analysis activities of the KGB First Chief Directorate.

On 04 April 1982 the French SDECE was replaced by the Directorate of the External Security (DGSE). Based on his experience as an enterprise manager, Stone Marion consolidated the structure and the cohesion of the service by the creation of a General Directorate that controls Directorates of Searches, Counterespionage, Personnel and the mythical Division Action. This stimulated the coordinate computerization of service. Furthermore, the DGSE was no longer permitted to operate on French territory.

The German BND regularly exchanges information with other security agencies, including the Federal Criminal Police Office, Customs and Federal Border Protection. In addition to daily current reporting to Bonn, in crisis situations the BND provides additional overview and situation assessment derived from its own sources or from the services of other countries. The BND has been involved in a coordinated European effort to stop arms deals and smuggling. The BND has deployed agents among Islamic activists in various German cities, and has intensified its surveillance of activities in Central Europe.

That's what we were up against. The UN was supposed to be chartered to promote peace and harmony, to prevent wars, etc., etc., etc. It was a perfect opportunity of nations to spy on each other. Usually assigned to the NY or Washington Embassy or Consulate, these folks had 2 jobs, spy on other nations and keep any eye on their diplomats, e.g. counterespionage.

Now that we were ready, we spent the first day, or most of it, at the UN taking the tours and looking in every nook and cranny. Fancy suits, boots and hats plus cameras but no hardware. Ron had schooled everyone to affect a Texas like drawl, with y'all being extensively practiced. A bunch of ranchers from the sticks, all dressed up in their Sunday best taking pictures of everything and everyone in sight. Although not schooled in trade-craft, The Three Amigos and their kids did pretty darned good.

After that, it was divide and follow the delegations. And eventually they screwed the pooch. Not the delegates, Ambassadors, themselves, but their assistants, and not in some fancy Park Avenue restaurant but in a pizza joint. Ron and Gary and the German were there first. Next came Derek and Al and the Russian. The Frenchman was naturally late and Clarence and I ended up there last. And there the 6 of us were, each team in a different booth with those tiny directional mikes all pointed at the same table. And they were speaking English so they didn't attract attention. We got EVERY word.

"That's some hot stuff," Gary said. "What are we going to do with it?"

"Make copies plus transcripts and give it to the papers and CNN," I said. "We'll give it to the NY Times, the Washington Post and the Washington Times plus CNN, FOX, MSNBC, CBS and ABC. The Washington Times will probably be the only one to run it, but when their papers hit the newsstands, the others won't have any choice."

Banner Headline: Plot to Overthrow the US

"Washington – The Times has learned from recorded conversations and transcripts of a plot by the Russians, Germans and French to scuttle efforts of the US in the UN. The three nations, referred to as the Tripartite by some, have been overheard discussing plans to intentionally block all ongoing US efforts at the United Nations. Caught in a discussion over pizza and beer in a NY City restaurant, the three individuals were caught on tape discussing their various operations. Turn to page 3 for a full transcript of the conversation."

We caught the next plane to Albuquerque with a connection to Roswell. Ritchie sent Rudi an e-mail, "Mission Complete". Rudi sent the 6 of us each a check for \$100,000 plus a separate check for expenses. The Post brought out a special edition and CNN and the others began to spin. Within a week, Rudi rose about 25 points in the polls and the House and Senate were calling for expulsion of everyone involved. We had been armed to the teeth, but only for protection. Once we were in disguise, we attracted attention from the 17th Precinct. We weren't playing by the rules; they said, we were sup-

posed to be dressed up in our western suits. You couldn't tell us from the average New Yorker, except we couldn't walk as fast and we spoke English.

I was thinking it would probably be quite a while before we picked up another contract and we were making plans to try and do something about the flow of drugs across the Mexican border. Ritchie wasn't too happy with the idea of our doing conventional law enforcement work and he got on the phone and had a long (5 minute) conversation with the President. Picked up a contract for us but with different terms. The President wanted the Mexican drug cartels put out of business permanently and was offering \$2.5 million a head for the Cartel Leaders, \$1 million each for their senior Lieutenants, \$350,000 each for the junior Lieutenants and \$100,000 a pop for the 'troops'. I was po'd! We didn't do wet work, that was the deal. Ritchie was making a liar out of me. Ritchie said that it beat the hell out of kidnapping them, dragging them to the US and then hoping they might get convicted in 3-4 years.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 25 – South of the Border

...down México way. I know what you're thinking, a song from a western movie, right? Nope, Frank Sinatra, 1953. Say does anyone know where I can hire a guy to whistle in the background? Sergio Leone died in 1989, or I'd ask him. Clarence was tall and lean and made the best Eastwood substitute, with a tan. We were all dressed up like western movie stars, with a twist. Aboard those pack mules were all of our modern armaments. Like back when we showed up at Mescalero.

Those tin badges weren't worth much in Mexico, I can tell you that. We didn't bother checking in with the authorities, either. We couldn't be sure if any of them weren't on the cartels' payrolls. Ritchie stayed in Roswell so there were just the 6 of us, plus. We trucked the horses down to the border and slipped across at night. When we cut the fence we bent it inward towards the US. And, we dragged sagebrush to try and cover our tracks a little. We dropped off a SINCGARS repeater at the border on the US side. But with our satellite phones, we probably wouldn't even need the radios. Still, we had the handy talkies, just in case.

We'd had a little time and everyone spent all of their time on the range, improving their accuracy and practicing their fast draw. The only member of the crew who spoke Spanish was Ron and he became the official spokesman of the group. Thing was, Ron said he'd learned most of his Spanish in Tijuana. He dad had spent every vacation in Tijuana for years and Ron and his brother were dragged along. The longer we worked together, the more I learned about The Three Amigos and why they only drank coffee and iced tea and could handle some nasty things.

It was a page out of the history books, our trip to México. Here were 6 'old time cowboys' (and a couple of Indians) up against groups of Méxicans armed with the latest firearms and equipment. Let's talk about that. In the modern era of semi-auto pistols, marksmanship wasn't really the name of the game. It was all about firepower. With handguns that held 13, 15, 17 and sometimes 19 rounds and rifles that took 30 and 40 round magazines, many people just sprayed and prayed. They prayed that all of those rounds would keep the other guy's head down until they got lucky and finally hit. I expect that's why The Three Amigos had such a love affair with the M1A rifle. And, another thing; now that we were LEO's we could own those 12" cruiser shotguns with pistol grips and we hung one on each of the saddle horns.

We crossed the border about ½ way between Las Palomas and Ciudad Juarez out of Dona Ana County. Travis insisted that he and one of the cousins come along to be our trackers. I don't know what for, we weren't planning on tracking anyone, but it lent more firepower to the equation. Travis wasn't into this Wild West stuff and he had an M16A3 and a Glock. We ambled the horses in the direction of Juarez looking for our first target, the Juarez Cartel aka the Chihuahua Cartel led by Juan Jose Esparragoza. Esparragoza who was in his 50s, was considered one of México's top drug lords not behind bars, overseeing the smuggling of cocaine and marijuana into the United States since 1993. He had moved from behind-the-scenes operations chief for the Juarez cartel to its lead-

er, Mexican and US authorities say.

Esparragoza was on a list of wanted foreign drug lords announced by President Bush in June 2004, and a federal grand jury indictment issued in El Paso, Texas, on Oct. 27, 2004 charges him with importing 14 tons of marijuana into American territory. The Juarez cartel was the only Mexican drug gang not hit hard by a string of top drug arrests, and some have suggested it was being protected by government officials, including authorities in Morelos state, which borders Mexico City.

The Juarez cartel had grown very powerful, but try to understand. With all of the crap that the US had been going through the past few years, drug enforcement wasn't the highest priority. However in 2008 with Rudi running for election and riding a wave of success because of the problems over at the UN, we were sent in to remedy the situation. Now, the President couldn't be associated with any of our work, but when we screwed up the trafficking and the street price for weed and coke started rising, he could claim some success in the War on Drugs.

Speaking of which, do you have any idea how many wars the US had going on? There was the War on Drugs, the War on Terror and the War on Poverty, just to name 3. And, there had been the 'real' wars including the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican American War, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. That left out the War with Barbary Pirates, the Invasion of Lebanon, the Invasion of Grenada, the Invasion of Panama, the Invasion of Somalia and last but not least the Invasion of Haiti.

So, we invaded Mexico, again, and it didn't take all that long to earn a little money. Let's see, it was one leader, 6 Senior Lieutenants, 6 Junior Lieutenants and a bunch of 'troops'. That came to $\$2.5 + \$6 + \$2.1 + \$3.7 = \$14.3$ (million) plus expenses, divided 7 ways, of course. That only left the Amezcua-Contreras Cartel, the Caro-Quentaro Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, the Omar Rocha-Soto Organization and the Tijuana Cartel, just to name a few. A man could get positively rich doing this, if he didn't get killed first. Considering how much the US had spent on the War on Drugs since Richard Nixon had started the war, Rudi was getting a bargain. And, that still left Columbia and a half dozen other countries.

$\$14.3$ million might sound like a lot of money but it was for 50 people at an average of $\$286,000$ a head. We had to renegotiate because whether a Leader, Lieutenant or a troop, they could all kill you just as dead. As a matter of fact, it was those $\$100,000$ guys who'd probably get you; there were more of them. The new deal paid a flat rate of $\$250,000$ a head with bonuses. The bonuses were $\$2$ million for the Cartel Leader(s), $\$500,000$ for the Senior Lieutenants and $\$250,000$ for the Junior Lieutenants. Under the new contract, those same 50 men would pay $50 * \$250,000$ plus bonuses of $\$2$ million, $\$3$ million and 1.5 million for a total of $\$19$ million, an average of $\$380,000$.

"Clarence," I said, "I really thought you were going to try and outdraw those fellas."

“With a single action revolver?” he laughed. “Hell no, Paladin, I just did what Eastwood really did in the movie. He didn’t outdraw 3 bad guys; those were spliced together scenes. He was standing there with that .45 in his hand to begin with and when they drew he shot them. THEN he re-holstered the gun and removed the Serape and they rearranged the footage.

“I agree,” Gary said, “But Clarence was lucky they were slow on the draw. Back in the ‘60’s when I was at Edwards, we went to some dangd fast draw demonstration. They gave us a 1911 loaded with a blank and cocked. Told us the minute they made a move to shoot them. We all ended up ‘dead’. And, I’m faster than Clarence.”

“You are not,” Clarence disagreed.

“Draw,” Gary said, loosening the thongs on both holsters.

“What a darn minute here fellas,” I said, “Those guns are loaded.”

“You can’t shoot anyone with an empty gun,” Gary snickered with an evil laugh.

Clarence, obviously the wiser of the two, didn’t un-thong his revolvers. Good thing for Gary, his guns were loaded with blanks but Clarence’s had live ammunition.

Next, we tackled the Amezcua-Contreras Cartel and came out pretty good. It was run by the brothers Luis and Jesus Amezcua-Contreras. It was a big organization and I do mean big. Each of the brothers had 5 Lieutenants and each of the Lieutenants had 3 Lieutenants and each of those Lieutenants had a couple dozen men. This bunch was big in the speed trade among other things. Taking over the drug routes once run by Columbians, the Méxicans’ influence and the level of public corruption in México have become major sources of friction between that country and the United States. In October (1997), the US government reported that more than 40 percent of the illegal immigrants who were deported to México last year had first been convicted of drug charges in US courts. Those numbers fit an overall pattern of an increase in crimes committed by illegal immigrants.

This job accounted for 87 souls, assuming they had souls. 2 Leaders, 10 Senior Lieutenants, 14 of the 15 Junior Lieutenants and 61 ‘soldiers’ bit the dust. Our dead and wounded, zero, we mostly shot them in the back. \$34,250,000; not bad, almost \$400k a head. We took a break to rest after that, it was a losing battle anyway. As long as there was someone to buy the product on our side of the border, there would always be someone to step in and replace the men we eliminated. In November of 2008, Rudi won the election. We had picked up \$14.3 plus \$34.25 or \$49,550,000, plus expenses. And old Gar-Bear turned out to be a meticulous accountant. Once elected, Rudi called off the ‘war’. That was good, because we were thinking that our luck was running out, at least south of the border.

Can you spell lucky? That's L-U-C-K-Y for the uninitiated. That's what you get when you stop a project just in time, lucky. Word filtered back that they had figured out our scheme of things and had been waiting for us to re-cross the border. Fortunately, we hadn't gone back. And, to tell the truth, we hadn't made much difference in the drug trade, just slowed it down long enough for ole Rudi to get elected. We didn't hear from him much after that either; maybe our activities were a little too high profile. And it was contract work and just how big do you think the President's slush fund is?

"I'm getting bored," Gary said to no one in particular one day.

"What do you want to do, Gar-Bear?" Ron asked.

We were riding when the discussion began. Ever seen those ads with Wilford Brimley for Liberty Medical? Sitting on a Bay telling you to buy from Liberty, etc. That's sort of what Ron looked like except his horse was a Chestnut and he didn't have a moustache or white hair. Brimley was a farmer and rodeo rider who, after gaining weight, became a blacksmith and then a film actor. A former bodyguard to 'Howard Hughes', he really was a diabetic. Who was the only US survivor of The FIRST Battle of Little Big Horn? (A horse named Comanche.)

"If I knew what I wanted to do, Ronald, I'd do it," Gary replied. "I don't need your permission."

How can you deal with a person who thinks like that? What did Ron giving permission have to do with Gary being bored? In fact, Gary seemed to be getting more senile every day, witness the earlier 'draw' statement. Then Sharon got him to resume his nebulizer treatments and with his brain getting more oxygen, he improved. I don't know why he bothered; smoking and having COPD didn't mix.

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Although ultimately a victor in World Wars I and II, France suffered extensive losses in its empire, wealth, manpower, and rank as a dominant nation-state. Nevertheless, France was one of the most modern countries in the world and is a leader among European nations. Since 1958, it had constructed a presidential democracy resistant to the instabilities experienced in earlier parliamentary democracies. In recent years, its reconciliation and cooperation with Germany have proved central to the economic integration of Europe, including the introduction of a common exchange currency, the euro, in January 1999. At present, France was at the forefront of European states seeking to exploit the momentum of monetary union to advance the creation of a more unified and capable European defense and security apparatus.

As Europe's largest economy and most populous nation, Germany remained a key member of the continents economic, political, and defense organizations. European power struggles immersed Germany in two devastating World Wars in the first half of the 20th century and left the country occupied by the victorious Allied powers of the US,

UK, France, and the Soviet Union in 1945. With the advent of the Cold War, two German states were formed in 1949: the western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the eastern German Democratic Republic (GDR). The democratic FRG embedded itself in key Western economic and security organizations, the EC, which became the EU, and NATO, while the Communist GDR was on the front line of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. The decline of the USSR and the end of the Cold War allowed for German unification in 1990. Since then, Germany had expended considerable funds to bring Eastern productivity and wages up to Western standards. In January 1999, Germany and 10 other EU countries introduced a common European exchange currency, the euro.

In February of 2009, we got un-bored in a hurry. It was the French and the Germans, naturally, the Russians knew better. After months of debate in Parlement, the French Senat and Assemblée Nationale declared war on the United States. The German Bundesrat (Senate) and the Bundestag (House) followed suit 4 days later. Germany had no nuclear weapons and apparently the French knew better than to use theirs. The French had 6 nuclear submarines, each carrying 16 missiles and each missile carrying 6 100KT warheads, a grand total of 576 warheads. The French also had 3 Squadrons of Mirage 2000 N and 2 fleets of Super Etendards equipped with the ASPM-A missiles with a 500km range (60 total).

When the French and Germans declared war on the United States, Congress immediately issued its own declaration of war. The American Fleet was placed on high alert and hurried to sail. All of the B-2 Bombers at Guam and Diego Garcia were recalled to Whiteman. B-83 bombs were loaded allowing the aircraft to immediately scramble. All of the nuclear cruise missiles the US didn't have were loaded aboard the SSGN's and all 18 of the SSBN's and SSGN's put to sea. All 94 of the B-52's including the 9 in reserve were equipped with 20 ALCM's each. The 92 B-1B bombers were armed with JDAMS.

And they gave a war and nobody came. The French and Germans didn't want to be the first to start, fearing American retaliation. The Americans didn't want to be the first to start because all anyone had done was talk. It was a gen-u-wine Mexican Standoff and México declared its neutrality. Sitting at DEFCON 2, Rudi had his finger on the trigger, so to speak. So Rudi sent a message to the French demanding they surrender. Why not, they'd surrendered to everyone else, 35 times. Not this time, however, the Germans were on their side, for a change.

A keg of dynamite won't explode by itself. It takes a spark to get the ball rolling; one tiny little spark. Anyone got a Zippo? It was like sitting on a time bomb listening to the clock tick but not being able to see the face of the clock. DHS went to threat level red. Not because they had any threats, but because it seemed like the thing to do. We sure got nervous there in Roswell, I can tell you that. We checked our supplies and bought some batteries (flashlight), we had everything else. We went to high yellow alert, issuing arms and ammunition to the residents.

Tick...

Tick...

Tick...

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 26 – KaBoom

For all-of-its military prowess, there is something that Europe lacks. None of the countries in Europe have any long-range, land-based bombers. If they do, they sure keep them well hidden. By contrast, the USA has 20 B-2's, 92 B-1B's and 94 B-52's. All of these planes can reach Europe and safely return. That's a fair amount of nuclear or conventional ordinance and these days, we use smart bombs. In order to launch an attack on the United States using bombers, the French would have to move their very small fleet of carriers into striking range of US forces.

But to do so would be to sacrifice the carriers to no good end. The US Navy was larger than the combined Navies of the remainder of the world. And, with the Russians out of the equation, there was simply no way to attack the United States unless one wanted to use nuclear forces. Use of nuclear forces was tantamount to committing suicide. Back during WW II, the Allies would mount air strikes at night, the British, and during the day, the Americans. Some of those raids by the 8th Air Force had up to 1,000 planes. In this day and age, America's small fleet of 207 long-range bombers could far exceed the capacity of several of the 1,000 plane raids. With every bomb hitting a target and sometimes as many as 30 or more precision weapons to the plane, The US could wipe out most of Europe in a couple of weeks' worth of bombing with conventional weapons. At least that was what The Three Amigos and I concluded sitting there waiting for the shoe to drop. The United States, we decided, could afford to wait. I told Ritchie to drop the alert level from High Yellow to Guarded.

Tick... Tick... Tick...

It seems that not everyone in the world was willing to wait while the US and Europeans decided who should shoot first. Where was it written that either side had to start the war? WW I had been started by the assassination of a minor luminary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand Hapsburg. Third in line to the throne at one point, he became heir through two untimely deaths. The first was of the Emperor's son, Crown Prince Rudolph, who killed himself (and his sixteen year old mistress) in 1889. The second was the death of his father, Archduke Charles Louis, in 1896. Now it was Franz Ferdinand that would be next in line for the Crown. The Archduke and his wife Sophie were assassinated in Sarajevo on 28Jun14 (their fourteenth wedding anniversary) by Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip. The Archduke's role of Inspector General of the Austrian army had brought him to Sarajevo for the summer maneuvers. Neither Emperor Franz Joseph (his uncle) nor the Kaiser (Wilhelm II) saw fit to attend the funeral.

Gary claimed that neither the Europeans nor the Americans would be the first ones to move. He was right. WW I happened at the end of a tremendous arms race. WW III happened because no one wanted to use their powerful weapons. All it took was for some of the Ayatollah's people to explode a couple of stolen Russian nukes in Paris. After that the war went on automatic pilot. French submarines having lost contact with Paris feared the worst and launched against the United States. At NORAD headquarters, the missile launches set off alarms and the US retaliated. Retaliated against the

French and the Germans. Spain, France and Germany account for most of the landmass of Europe. Spain was neutral and was spared a direct attack. So were many other countries like Belgium, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Italy and the islands of the western Mediterranean.

But only one of those countries took Civil Defense serious in a very large way, Switzerland, and did they ever get serious after 9/11. They ran a nationwide drill to test their system and it worked. 100% of the Swiss population can be put in permanent shelters. And did you know that the Swiss could field an Army of 600,000 in defense of their country? I didn't, but Gary did. Thus about 60% of the landmass of Europe was subjected to the American retaliation, all because some ragheads killed some Frenchmen. For those inclined to say it couldn't happen to a nicer bunch of people, don't forget, the US retaliated. Which somehow just naturally implies that there was some reason to retaliate in the first place.

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The largest French nuclear weapon was 300kt, the smallest 100kt. It depended upon whether they launched M-4's or M-45's. None of which made any difference if one of them fell on you. The nearest significant targets to those of us in Roswell were the US military installations to the southwest of us at White Sands, Alamogordo and Ft. Bliss. The French made military targets their number one priority and major US cities their second priority. First priority, second priority or third priority, it made no difference except when the warhead hit. Finally the silo became very important, I was beginning to wonder, frankly. I'd retired from killing only to end up killing a lot more people, gotten a pardon and a license to kill. And, I killed some more, would it ever stop?

Those folks in Roswell got serious about survival and after the lights came back on they took significant steps to pretend they were Swiss. Obviously my message had gotten through to them and they realized that if TSHTF, 50,000 people wouldn't fit in my silo. Neither would I provide them with electricity or food. But the country as a whole lacked a Civil Defense program. No one would mess with the United States; we were the most powerful nation on the Earth. The military managed to save the ships, because all were at sea. The bombers scrambled if for no other reason than to save their butts. They put up as many fighter aircraft as they could get to fly and the Army did the best they could to protect the troops, which wasn't a hell of a lot. On the other hand most of the troops weren't at their bases in the first place, but Nevada looked almost green from the air.

If you were sitting in Washington, DC with your finger on the button, would YOU leave the troops as sitting ducks? Remember 9/11? God Bless Rudi, he had the smarts and the time to move the troops ahead of time. An unfortunate few were left to guard the bases but life can't be perfect. We went from Guarded (Blue) to Red in an instant and people started to fill the silo. Most had moved important possessions to the shelter when we were at high yellow and hadn't bothered to remove them. Another thing that helped was the flying time of the French missiles. I imagine that we did a whole lot bet-

ter than those folks on the east coast, we had more time. They managed to hit California; the M-45 had a range of 6,000km (3,728 miles).

The M-45 replaced the M-4 as the core of the French sea-based deterrent force. A strategic weapon, the M-45 has sufficient range to strike most key population centers from the safety of international waters. As submarines are naturally difficult to locate, the missiles can be kept safe from a pre-emptive strike and can penetrate enemy waters to increase the number of potential targets. The distribution of six potent warheads over a single target area gives the M-45 superior performance against civilian populations than a single larger warhead. Its accuracy is insufficient for use against hardened targets, though it is easily capable of destroying large, soft targets such as cities. These factors make the M-45 an effective deterrent weapon, to be used in the case of an attack.

However... the French replaced the Redoubtable class with the Triomphant class and two of the four Triomphant class subs were equipped with the M-51 SLBMs with 10 110kT warheads and a range of >10,000km, The last of the class came equipped with the M-51s and one other sub had been retrofitted.

And, the French were attacked first and retaliated forcing the US to retaliate in turn. Gary said he could hear the newscaster in his head. Was this a tragedy that could have been avoided? Darn right it could have been avoided, he went on to say, if those French SOBs and the Germans hadn't started the trouble in the first place by joining Russia and ganging up on the US back in 2003. It was all downhill from there, he said, although he admitted he was surprised that the French and Germans had declared war on the United States. "Pretty dangged dumb thing to do considering this country's history when it came to war."

All of which was totally irrelevant unless you know some way to un-explode a 100kT/110kT nuclear warhead. I'll give you 576 chances to try. When this whole drill started and the French declared war on the US, Ritchie got very nervous. He was afraid that a nuclear attack would happen and take down his precious Internet. That's when it became important to have a T-3 connection, a credit card and a lot of disk space. Ritchie had gotten together with one of those manufacturers while we were off in Mexico saving the world, which one I have no idea, and had put in some kind of storage network. He tried to explain it, but it was over my head. He was talking about hot swappable drives and SAN, or something else similar. You know what these geeks are like when they're talking 3 miles a minute about something only they understand; RAID 50 and RAID 10 and RAID 0-5. I didn't know about any darned raid, the war hadn't started yet.

Don't get Ritchie started, he'll use terms like LAN and WAN and client and server, well I knew about those anyway. And T-3 wasn't anything like the connection he wanted but at \$15,000 a month, I told him just to order software instead of downloading it. He really got excited when he found out he could have had OC-3, OC-12, OC-48 or OC-192. I put my foot down and then the French attacked and it really didn't make any difference any more.

Not all of the radio stations got knocked off the air. Ritchie said it was because the war-heads had been exploded in ground bursts or near ground busts. The higher the weapon went off, he said, the worse it was on electronics and the lower the ground burst went off, the worse the fallout. The good news was that everything was billed on the credit cards. Ritchie claimed that we might not get the bills for a long time, if ever. If it was on the net and you could download it, Ritchie had it, claiming it might come in handy when The Three Amigos and Paladin tried to rebuild the world. At least with some radios managing to stay on the air we had a little news and it wasn't good. Did that mean more ground bursts than airbursts?

One of the upsides turned out to be all of those jobs we had done. Man, talk about equipment. Anytime we needed something we either requisitioned government equipment or went out and bought it and saved the receipt so we could be reimbursed for the expense. Things like encrypted satellite telephones and surveillance cameras. Things we couldn't buy or get issued, we stole. For instance, Ritchie hacked into the NSA computers and download thousands of satellite images and then used a program to convert the photos to topo maps. A few dozen blank passports had gotten mislaid, as did some other documents. Give Ritchie the original and unless it took some kind of paper we couldn't get, he could reproduce it using that computer system.

At the time we just thought we were being prudent and preparing ahead for more contract business. As it turned out some of those things would become extremely important in the coming days as the country struggled to rebuild. We ended up in the silo for 3 weeks before the radiation level fell to a point that we could egress. Every US nuclear power plant and some of the fuel rod storage facilities had been targeted. It really wasn't all that hard for the French to do it there had been a sustained warming period in relations for a while and they took advantage of it.

"What's the radiation level?" Ron asked.

"In a hurry to get outside Ron?" I inquired.

"No, but old Gar-Bear is doing his claustrophobia routine so we need to get out pretty soon," he replied. "Otherwise he may go postal on us."

"Doesn't he take something to sleep?" I asked, "I thought I heard him say something about freeze dried alcohol."

"He takes 0.5 mg of Xanax every night," Ron said.

"I get the Doc to raise his dose, if that will help," I suggested.

"Double it and if that doesn't chill him out, tell the Doc to insist he take it 3 times a day instead of just at bedtime," Ron urged.

"Ritchie says about another week, the radiation level is still just a shade high," I related.

"I wonder what we're going to find when we get topside," Ron said to no one in particular.

"Well, we didn't have a hit anywhere near us, so other than some left over radioactivity, I think it will look normal," I responded repeating something else Ritchie had mentioned.

"They hit Palo Verde, didn't they?" Ron asked.

"Yes, why?" I was curious.

"There were lots of fuel rods at Palo Verde according to Gar-Bear," Ron said. "If the wind was out of the west, Phoenix will be pretty hot."

"Phoenix took 2 strikes, Ron," I pointed out, "It will be hot for a while regardless."

I was more than a little impressed with that Palo Verde comment. "So tell me, how come he has so much information of the hazards out there?"

"I guess that was the upside to his fiction stories," Ron chuckled. "He did a lot of research on the Internet. You having this silo and starting a trailer park got him to put his house on the market the same day you went by. He did that before he even talked to Clarence and me. He has a second 60Gb drive in that computer of his with nothing but downloaded pdf files."

"Sounds like Ritchie and his storage array," I mentioned. "Except he has terabytes of files and programs."

"Sorry about the delay in getting out of the silo," I said, "We didn't invoke the seven-ten rule until the radiation level peaked. We're monitoring the outside and will go out and look things over when it gets down to 1mR/hr."

"How bad do you think it is out there?" Ron asked referring to the country as a whole.

"I have no idea, Ron. I suspect the east coast was hit pretty badly," I replied. "We'll just have to wait and see. We're monitoring all of the radio broadcasts."

The radiation had peaked and Ritchie had started a computer program that counted down from 343 hours. I talked to the Doc and got him to increase Gary's Xanax level to the full 0.5mg TID and asked Sharon to make sure he took all 3 pills every day. Gary got very mellow in a hurry. We weren't planning on saving the country or the world; we just didn't want to be inconvenienced by WW III. Before we could get outside and have a look around, Gary showed up wanting to talk to me.

"Thanks for adjusting my meds," he said, "I'm calmed down now. Say, in one of my stories, I wrote about the Arizona Rangers. I can't remember, but I think it was *Prepara-*

tions // I know we're Marshals not Rangers, but we might need to start acting like Marshals. I was either born 100 years too late or 100 years too soon."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"Well, I like the computers, that's plain enough, got my first one in 1983," he replied. "But I had my first brace of 6 guns long before that. Had me a pair of Ruger Blackhawk's, the originals, way back in '73."

"You've had your chance at playing cowboys and Indians," I pointed out.

"It wasn't the same, we were both on the same side," he laughed. "I've got to be going, just wanted to thank you for the meds."

Gary left the command center humming what I recognized to be an old Marty Robbins tune, 'Big Iron'. A few days later the sustained radiation level was 1mR/hr and falling ever so slightly. We put on the protection suits Ritchie had bought and went topside to survey the damage. It was a clear day, but the sun seemed a little dim. Aside from the very rare hotspot, there wasn't any radiation and I told Ritchie to get them out of the shelter.

"When the guys come out," I suggested, "Have them make a run into town and see how everyone made out."

"Ok, boss," Ritchie replied, "I've got it covered."

A nuclear warhead isn't very distinguishing. Over in Europe, even though the US had only hit France and Germany, the radiation had spread just about everywhere. The Swiss were ok, I presumed, they had their shelters. Hopefully the Brits had gotten underground, too. As for the rest of them, they didn't sit on France and Germany. Some European Union! At this time, of course, we didn't have the whole story about what had caused the French to nuke the US.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 27 – Picking Up the Pieces

*To the town of Agua Fria, rode a stranger one fine day.
Hardly spoke to folks around him, didn't have too much to say.
No one dared to ask his business, no one dared to make a slip.
For the stranger there amongst them, had a big iron on his hip.
Big iron on his hip.*

*It was early in the morning, when he rode into the town.
He came riding from the south side, slowly lookin' all around.
He's an outlaw loose and running, came the whisper from each lip.
And he's here to do some business, with the big iron on his hip.
Big iron on his hip.*

*In this town there lived an outlaw, by the name of Texas Red.
Many men had tried to take him and that many men were dead.
He was vicious and a killer, though a youth of twenty-four.
And the notches on his pistol, numbered one and nineteen more.
One and nineteen more.*

*Now the stranger started talking, made it plain to folks around;
Was an Arizona Ranger, wouldn't be too long in town.
He came here to take an outlaw back, alive, or maybe dead.
And he said it didn't matter; he was after Texas Red.
After Texas Red.*

*Wasn't long before the story was relayed to Texas Red.
But the outlaw didn't worry; men that tried before were dead.
Twenty men had tried to take him; twenty men had made a slip.
Twenty-one would be the Ranger; with the big iron on his hip.
Big iron on his hip.*

*The morning passed so quickly, it was time for them to meet.
It was twenty past eleven, when they walked out in the street.
Folks were watching from their windows; every-body held their breath.
They knew this handsome Ranger, was about to meet his death.
About to meet his death.*

*There was forty feet between them, when they stopped to make their play.
And the swiftness of the Ranger, is still talked about today.
Texas Red had not cleared leather, when a bullet fairly ripped.
And the Ranger's aim was deadly, with the big iron on his hip.
Big iron on his hip.*

*It was over in a moment, and the folks had gathered round.
There before them lay the body of the outlaw, on the ground.*

*Oh, he might have gone on living, but he made one fatal slip.
When he tried to match the Ranger, with the big iron on his hip.
Big iron on his hip.*

*Big iron. Big iron.
When he tried to match the Ranger, with the big iron on his hip.*

Agua Fria is just off US 60 northwest of Phoenix, if you're wondering. It is about 25 miles northwest of modern day downtown Phoenix. Old Gar-Bear had dug out his Marty Robbins collection of CD's and was playing them over and over again. Sharon was about to shoot him, but Ron and Clarence seemed to enjoy the music, especially Ron. Everyone in Roswell was ok, they'd had enough time to sandbag some community buildings and the radiation level simply hadn't gotten that high, 10 Rads, briefly. There wasn't any shortage of sand there in Roswell, only of bags.

Our livestock was ok so The Three Amigos had saddled up and had a look around. According to the radio, most of the US military came through the attack intact. Rudi declared Martial Law from his shelter at Mt. Weather and a dusk to dawn curfew. The only exception was peace officers and the military. The amigos came dragging back 15 young men from Roswell and Ritchie swore them in. Travis and 3 cousins showed up and they got sworn in too. Counting the 19 others and the 7 of us, we now had 26 Marshals. One US Marshal and 25 Deputies, to be precise. The number didn't click at the time.

I was right, you know, the east coast took the blunt of the damage. The French had fired everything they had and some large cities had multiple strikes. This was apparently intentional to allow for the small (350m) CEP of the missiles. Palmdale, we later learned, didn't fare well. One of the French warheads came in a little short. Ritchie divided us up into 11 teams of 2 and one team of 3. He stayed in the command center orchestrating everything and the 3-man team kept an eye on Roswell. The other 11 teams started to reach out and see what the people in our immediate area needed. It was more than we had to offer, frankly.

Having 4 of us sitting around Roswell didn't make a lot of sense; the Chief of Police had everything there under control. I said something to Ritchie about it and he said he'd work on it. The next thing you know, one of Travis's relations showed up and Ritchie swore him in. Gary's son Damon was doing moderately well on his meds, but was a bit on the flaky side and Ritchie passed on him. Ron's son Kevin was content to spend his time sleeping and he didn't appear to have the energy to mount a horse. With the extra man, we left Ritchie in charge in Roswell and put 2 more teams in the field.

The military was stretched pretty thin, cleaning up the country. They had a lot of practice at that and things went much more smoothly this time. Eventually we got a message from Rudi wanting to know if we'd cover New Mexico and free up some troops to help with the cleanup. Ritchie sent a message back telling Mr. President that we'd been doing that since we'd come out of the silo and to go ahead and pull the troops. We did

things a little differently, I suppose, than Rudi Giuliani figured we would. He probably wanted us to arrest the bad guys and drag them all the way back to Roswell so the federal judge and a bunch of attorneys could spend a lot of time fooling around to dispense justice. There were only 26 of us out there around the state and we didn't have a lot of time to fool around. Besides, The Three Amigos were getting a lot older.

Judges must beware of hard constructions and strained inferences, for there is no worse torture than that of laws. – Francis Bacon

It is better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer. – William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*

Justice consists in doing no injury to men; decency in giving them no offence. – Cicero

Justice shines by its own light. – Cicero, *De Officiis*

There is no such thing as justice - in or out of court. – Clarence S. Darrow

Justice is always violent to the party offending, for every man is innocent in his own eyes.” – Daniel Defoe, *The Shortest Way With The Dissenters*

Justice is the means by which established injustices are sanctioned. – Anatole France, *Crainquebille*

Justice delayed, is justice denied. – William Ewart Gladstone

“Fidelity is the sister of justice.” – Horace

Courtroom: A place where Jesus Christ and Judas Iscariot would be equals, with the betting odds in favour of Judas. – Henry Louis Mencken

Justice without force is powerless; force without justice is tyrannical. – Blaise Pascal

The minute you read something you can't understand, you can almost be sure it was drawn up by a lawyer. - Will Rogers

There is a point at which even justice does injury. – Sophocles

It is better to risk saving a guilty person than to condemn an innocent one. – Voltaire, *Zadig*

Justice, sir, is the great interest of man on earth. It is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nations together. – Daniel Webster

For justice, though she's painted blind, is to the weaker side inclined. – SAMUEL BUTLER (d 1680), *Hudibras*

Injustice is relatively easy to bear; what stings is justice. – H.L. MENCKEN, *Prejudices*

Justice is lame as well as blind, amongst us. – THOMAS OTWAY, *Venice Preserved*

Mankind censure injustice, fearing that they may be the victims of it and not because they shrink from committing it. – PLATO, *The Republic*

The judge is condemned when the criminal is acquitted. – PUBLILIUS SYRUS, *Maxims*

We love justice greatly, and just men but little. – JOSEPH ROUX, *Meditations of a Parish Priest*

Use every man after his desert, and who should `scape whipping? – SHAKESPEAR, *Hamlet*

There is a point beyond which even justice becomes unjust. - SOPHOCLES, *Electra*

We redefined justice and it came from the barrel of a .45 Colt caliber or a shotgun or whatever gun was handy. What was the point of holding a trial for someone you saw committing an atrocity? There were enough crimes where there were no living witnesses and we weren't forensic experts. We drove pickups and towed the horses because there was too much ground to cover any other way. New Mexico is sparsely populated with about 2 million people before the attack. Alamogordo, Albuquerque, Carlsbad, Clovis, Farmington, Hobbs, Las Cruces, Rio Rancho, Roswell and Santa Fe accounted for about 45% of the population. You could eliminate Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Alamogordo; they'd either been hit directly or were close to a military target of value to the French.

Despite the attacks we realized that New Mexico had about 1.3 million survivors. The same couldn't be said for places like NY City. 6 warheads had been targeted on that city, according to the radio, and there was massive loss of life. It would have been worse if the attack had come totally unexpected, but a lot of the people who worked in the city lived elsewhere and had stopped going to work. You could say goodbye to Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Charlotte, Atlanta, Detroit, Chicago, Columbus, Dallas-Ft. Worth and a host of other major cities. You could say goodbye to about one-third to one-half of the nation's population as well. And, don't forget to bid farewell to the United Nations.

The move to the light came when Stacy got tired of living in the silo.

"So when are we going to have a regular home like other people, honey?" she asked.

"This is a very nice apartment and even you'll have to admit it's safe," I replied.

“Norma and I were talking and we’re both tired of living in a hole in the ground,” she admonished.

“How long has this been coming on?” I asked.

“For a very long time, honey,” she smiled, “Since the lights came back on the first time.”

“I’ll talk to Ritchie and see about putting in a couple of triplewides,” I suggested.

“Mission accomplished,” she said. “We move tomorrow.”

There is absolutely no point in arguing with a woman once she has her mind made up. I went to see Ritchie and he said that Norma had done the deed all by herself and he was in the same boat as I. I told him to get his butt into town and find someone to move the stuff. He said he would and suggested that since we’d have 2 extra floors of space we spread out the bunks a little more. This would only leave 100 bunks per floor and reduce the claustrophobia. I told him to do whatever he wanted; I was too busy being Marshal Bill Tilghman and ridding the west of outlaws. Speaking of which, do you know the name of the new federal judge in Roswell? His name was James Aubrey Parker, appointed by Reagan, and he was the grandson or great-grandson of Isaac Parker.

In the year 1875 there existed in the United States a wild and largely untamed land where outlaws ruled. (NO, this was not Detroit or the South Bronx!) This vast region was known as the Indian Territory and was located in the area, which is now the state of Oklahoma. This territory was populated by a mixture of cattle thieves, horse thieves, prostitutes, desperados, whiskey peddlers and numerous unsavory characters who sought refuge in a region free of “White Man’s Court” and without laws which could be used to extradite them for trial.

The Civil War wrecked the relative peace of the five civilized tribes of Indians that lived in the territory. It created a storm of racial hatred and unbridled vice. This was the American frontier at its very worst. Folks, this was a baaa-aaad place!

The only court with jurisdiction over the Indian Territory was the US Court for the Western District of Arkansas located in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Fort Smith was situated on the border of Western Arkansas and Indian Territory. To this court came Judge Issac Parker who was named to replace a corrupt judge at Fort Smith in May of 1875. A severe and able Federal Judge, Isaac Parker was nicknamed “The Hanging Judge” because of the many men he sent to the gallows.

During his 21 years on the bench at Fort Smith, Judge Parker sentenced 160 men to die and hanged 79 of them. It didn’t take Parker long to get going. On May 10, 1875 – only 8 days after he arrived at Fort Smith – he opened his first term of court. Eighteen persons came before him charged with murder and 15 were convicted. Eight of them were sentenced to die on the gallows on September 3, 1875. One was killed trying to escape and a second had his sentence commuted to life in prison because of his youth.

The new judge decreed that under the present circumstances, he thought that maybe he'd try and adopt his forbearer's style. He wasn't sure he'd get away with it, but this was an emergency after all. And once that rope tightened around the bad guy's neck it couldn't be undone. Kind of like those frogs and their 100kt nuclear warheads. (As of this point in time, I was just a lawman, what the judge did was strictly up to him and his conscience.)

All wars have unintended consequences. No matter how cautious generals and political leaders are, war sets in motion waves of change that can alter the currents of history. More often, generals and political leaders are not troubled by long-term side effects; they are sharply focused on achieving a victory and war's aims. The result is that the unseen and unintended occur, at times as a bitter riptide, which overwhelms the original rationales for engaging in armed combat.

The continuing enthusiasm some American political and military leaders have for nuclear weapons—as demonstrated once again by the Senate rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—is commonly said to be caused by the persistence of Cold War thinking. General Lee Butler, once commander-in-chief of US Strategic Command, calls it a *failure of strategic vision*. So it is.

But just as surely as dog-eared Cold War-era thinking persists in Congress, the Pentagon, in the nuclear weapon labs, and in a passel of think tanks, truly visionary thinking also abounds. Nuclear weapons should be kept around to deter the use of weapons of mass destruction, goes the prevailing mantra. But otherwise, wars of the future will be fought with precision, standoff weapons armed with conventional explosives. Nothing terribly Cold War about that. Indeed, studies analyzing and/or promoting this idea—which is integral to the “Revolution in Military Affairs”—have become a cottage industry.

During my long and not too illustrious career, I had tried to avoid collateral damage. As a professional, I had been completely successful. However, once The Three Amigos and I started to save the country, things took a turn for the worse. The first collateral damage came when I shot down Marine-One. I doubt that the pilot, co-pilot or crewmembers' wives would understand. Then, there had been the 7 women at 3rd Manassas. The lady colonel shot at us so it wasn't collateral damage. The other 6 women were caught in the return fire before we sorted out who was shooting and that WAS collateral damage. Gary mentioned the movie, *Collateral Damage*. It was awaiting release when the terrorists struck the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. I hadn't seen it and he told me about it.

“Gordy Brewer's family was killed in an explosion. The man responsible is a Columbian known as The Wolf. When the government feels that they have more important things to be concerned about than Brewer, Brewer decides to take things into his own hands. He goes to Columbia to try and find The Wolf but discovers that it's not going to be that easy. And when a woman and her child get in his way he has to decide just how much

like the Wolf he is willing to be. What Would You Do If You Lost Everything? Nothing is more dangerous than a man with nothing to lose.”

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 28 – Living by the Gun

Those who live by the sword (or gun) will die by the sword (or gun). When Judas had betrayed Jesus and a crowd came up to arrest Him, the Apostle Peter drew a sword and attacked one of the guards. Mt 26:52 records, “Jesus said to him, *Put your sword back in its place, for all those who take up the sword perish by the sword.*” Now you take all of those Christian Patriots out there. I expect they’ll find some way to turn it around and justify their behavior. I didn’t have to justify my behavior, but I did consider myself forewarned. I will take judicial notice of the fact that Jesus lived about 2,000 years ago and was a pacifist. When they wanted to stone the woman, He said, I Plus, his girlfriend was a hooker.

On the other hand, He was a strong supporter of the Old Testament and I doubt he disapproved of the Judges. Judges administered the will of the people, didn’t they? It sort of depended upon where you stopped reading the Bible. If you stopped at “An Eye For An Eye”, you’d be in big trouble. “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, ‘Do not resist injuries (“evil” in KJV), but whoever strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other as well” (Matt. 5:38-39 Modern Language Version). It came from the Sermon on the Mount. So did:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven”

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”

By the way, He also said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place.” (Mt 5:17-18) And folks, it isn’t murder if you shoot them and then tell them to throw up their hands or you’ll shoot. Or, is it the other way around? Anyway it ended up the same, regardless. They could die quick by the bullet or quick by the rope after worrying themselves almost to death.

Do you want to see me justify what we were doing on the basis of The Beatitudes, believe, me I can. We were of pure heart and didn’t kill anyone who didn’t deserve it. We kept the peace. If they surrendered, we showed them mercy and let the Judge hang them. Oh yeah, we fit right in with those Beatitudes. And it went on that way for a ‘long’ time. Then, all of those surviving liberals came out of the woodwork like so many worms

and everything went to hell in a hurry. That was about 2 months after Ritchie had talked to Rudi. So, we pulled in the reins and let them fight among themselves. We stayed in Roswell until committees from several cities came begging for help, about a month later.

“He was brilliant, controversial, aloof, egotistical, imperious, courageous and highly intelligent,” Gary announced. “He quoted Santayana and said, *Only the dead have seen the end of war.* He also said. *Duty, honor, country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.* He wasn’t the soldier’s soldier and didn’t much care for blood and guts.”

“Who or what are you ranting about now, Gar-Bear?” Ron quizzed.

“I was just looking in the mirror wondering what my obituary would say,” Gary laughed.

“You’re shining us on,” Clarence said.

“If I am, then prove it and tell me who else the description fits but yours truly,” Gary challenged.

I’d noticed that Gary liked to play trivia games. He was pretty good at it when his memory was working. Unless the question was something simple like what he’d had for breakfast or whether or not he’d eaten. Those 3 old dudes popped a lot of pills. Ron took medicine for his heart and his cholesterol, Gary took medicine for diabetes, depression and high blood pressure and Clarence took pills for everything except depression. Clarence most definitely wasn’t depressed; he was jovial about most everything.

“What do you think boys,” I asked, “Are we going to save New Mexico from the bad guys?”

“Let them eat cake,” Gary said. “The most virtuous are those who content themselves with being virtuous without seeking to appear so.”

“Huh? What did you just say?” Ron asked.

“I said let them eat cake Ronald,” Gary said. “It’s not our problem. They wanted us to stop. I say to hell with them.”

“Gary,” Clarence butted in, “What do you want to be like that for? They came asking for our help.”

“Yeah, after they told us they didn’t need or want our help,” Gary answered. “I’m not hauling around anymore prisoners even if they are chained in the back of my truck.”

“Maybe Judge Parker will let you spring the trapdoor,” I suggested.

“Nah, at least when I shoot them they have a chance to defend themselves,” Gary said.

“You stopped shooting them in the back?” Clarence asked.

“They doing their Abbott and Costello routine or one from the three stooges?” Stacy asked.

“You got me honey, I’ve never heard this one before,” I admitted.

“Gary and Clarence are both right, you know,” Stacy said. “Clarence is right when he says you fellas should help them and Gary is right that they’re ungrateful.”

“What about me?” Ron asked.

“I didn’t realize that you were part of the conversation,” Stacy replied. “Do you have a suggestion?”

“No,” Ron smiled.

“Why don’t you fellas set up a communications system with the major communities and only go out when they radio in they have a major problem?” Stacy suggested.

“What about the smaller communities, honey?” I asked.

“They have police radios and can radio the larger communities for assistance, dear,” she said. “Anyway, most of those problems are local problems they can handle themselves. You fellas only really need to get involved when there is a federal question, this isn’t really the old Wild West, you know.”

“Sound good to me fellas, what do you think,” I asked.

“We still have those 4-horse trailers so if we go out in 4-man teams, I’ll go along,” Gary said.

“Yeah ok,” Ron grumbled.

“Good idea,” Clarence agreed.

“Ritchie, how many of the 4-horse trailers do we have?” I asked.

“Enough for all of the Hummers we have with the Ma Deuces and Mk-19’s, boss,” he answered.

Further discussion resolved that when we got a call for assistance we’d take at least one Ma Deuce and one Mk-19 equipped Hummer and at least 8 Deputies. With that

kind of fire power and that many people we shouldn't run into anything we couldn't handle. We weren't those Texans who claimed 'one riot, one ranger'. I suggested that Ritchie send out an email to all of the affected communities. Ritchie promptly reminded me that the Internet hadn't been brought back up online yet and we should maybe deliver the radios that Stacy suggested and explain the new game plan to the larger communities. He said we had enough of the SINCGARS equipment to implement that part of the plan. We could assign a different channel to each of the larger communities and in case they failed to identify themselves, we'd know who it was just by the channel they used.

Carlsbad (1), Clovis (2), Farmington (3), Hobbs (4), Rio Rancho (5) and Santa Fe (6) would get the equipment and 3 teams of 8 men and two vehicles could make the deliveries. The other two men could deliver the equipment to Roswell (7) and help them get it set up. The Police Departments in those 7 communities could then contact the smaller communities and get the relay system in place. I didn't really expect we'd get many calls because everything was tied into the local law enforcement and the big cities could provide mutual aid to the smaller communities. I failed to consider that a crime on federal property was a crime on a government reservation, by definition, and generally within the jurisdiction of the FBI. Ritchie corrected me on that and forwarded a message to Mt. Weather to get Presidential clearance for our new program.

Hey, I'm not perfect here and I sometimes overlook the obvious, easily described by the following quote: *Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber.* Ever get involved in local politics? What a frigin' mess! The smaller communities turned out to be all in favor of the arrangement but the larger communities wanted to interfere in their affairs, especially if they were called upon to provide mutual aid. We didn't really have time for this and eventually Ritchie put out the word that if it was a local problem and we were to stay out of it.

Having Ritchie as the US Marshal and me as a Deputy wasn't without its problems. This had originally been my business and I'd brought Ritchie in as a full partner because of his Internet information services, which were bringing in big bucks. But with the Internet down and likely to be down for a while, the only business the security company had was gone because we were not taking security consulting jobs these days. I had assumed that Ritchie would be too busy with his computer to really get involved in the day-to-day Marshal business. I was wrong; the system was up and running smoothly and Norma could handle anything, which gave Ritchie time to meddle in the Marshaling.

We arranged the 7 communities in alphabetical order, numbered them and gave them a channel according to their number. The lower channels had a slightly longer range. Community 1 used channel 0100, etc. Ritchie informed me that Mr. President Giuliani also set us up on a compensation system, \$100,000 per year for the Deputies and \$110,000 per year for him. Plus expenses, of course.

At first all of the troubles had been local in nature. We were like the IRS who believed in advertising. Every time the IRS prosecuted someone for cheating on their taxes they put

it in the paper and dozens of people filed returns. Every time we dispensed justice in the old fashioned way the local troubles vanished, for a while. Then they booted us and we eventually worked out this new arrangement. It became wait and see. Unfortunately, we didn't have to wait too long to see. We expected trouble from the west, but 'they' hit Hobbs and we only knew it was Hobbs because it was on channel 400. Just a brief Mayday followed by silence.

We needed the Calvary, but they were off cleaning up after the French attack. So we loaded up our horse trailers and took 4 Hummers with machineguns and 3 with Mk-19's and headed for Hobbs; all 27 of us including Ritchie. Ritchie was really into the 9mm stuff, bringing an MP5 and a Glock 17 with a half dozen 19-round magazines. The rest of us were more prudent, bringing M1A's, M16A3/M203's and a bunch of LAW's. We had our .45's and Winchester's because we had no idea what we were getting into. Trouble we figured. It was just shy of 120 miles with us taking 380 to the east and then turning south. Even pedal to the metal, it took 3 hours to get there from the time we got the Mayday.

Hobbs must have gotten a call out on their police radios or something because when we finally arrived some of the smaller communities in the area had already responded and knew what was going on. The first word I heard that I recognized was Comancheros. There hadn't been any Comancheros in New Mexico since 1870, according to Gary who studied history. He said they'd been wiped out in the Red River War. What was left of them had settled in the west panhandle area 135 years before. Must have run out of beans there in Texas because here they were back in New Mexico where they'd started in the first place back in the 1840's. Why do bad things happening to the country always bring out the worst in people?

Between the Hobb's PD and the local mutual aid, they had those Comancheros boxed up in Air Base City to the northwest of Hobbs. Word was that this was a bad bunch and they were armed with automatic weapons. We had automatic weapons too so we left the Winchester's in their scabbards and strapped 3 LAW's behind each saddle and laid an M16A3/M203 across our laps. We always took the horses to the range when we practiced and they were over being gun shy. We moved the Hummers in as close to the group as we could manage and got some of the cops to man the machine guns and Mk-19's. Then, we climbed into our saddles and went to see what the bad guys were up to.

The Comancheros were down in that area at the end of Jack Gomez Boulevard and trapped. I'd better back up here and explain something. Ritchie was the US Marshal and as such was in nominal charge. The only thing I can figure is that while we were down in old Mexico cleaning up those Cartels, he was sitting there in Roswell watching western movies. I told him that we had a numerical advantage on the Comancheros and that we had them out gunned with the machineguns and automatic grenade launchers. All we had to do, I said, was form a semi-circle to the east and pour in the rounds. Hell, there were only about 40 of them and between the cops from everywhere and the 27 of us; we had them outnumbered 2 to 1. Ritchie flatly insisted that we mount up and ride in there and no amount of talking could dissuade him.

If I had it to do all over again, I would have insisted because there is no more dangerous critter than a trapped rat. I suppose it was quite a sight, the 27 of us on horses riding up against those Comancheros. Ritchie must have figured that they'd let us ride in and call them out, but it didn't work that way. When we got within rifle range, they opened up because they were a whole lot smarter than Ritchie. Clarence took a round in his left leg and it killed his horse. Then Ron and Gary were hit. In about a minute and a half, half of us were down; all except Ritchie who was still sitting on his horse, looking around.

Dumb, dumb, dumb. Those machineguns and Mk-19's opened up when we went down and made short shift of those Comancheros. I had to pull Ritchie off his horse so they could open up, for crying out loud. The bullet had missed the bone in Clarence's leg but he was bleeding pretty good. Gary had a round in his right shoulder and a second in his right arm and Ronald was gut shot. Derek and Al had escaped with only a graze and I was shot in the fleshy part of my left side. Ritchie hadn't even mussed his hair. They loaded the worst of us up on choppers and hauled us to the hospital in Hobbs. About that time I was thinking about Norma and how badly she'd feel to be a widow.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 29 – Changes

It was more than slightly obvious that some changes needed to be made. Ritchie almost got us killed and I let him get away with it. I'd have probably shot him but I figured Stacy would really get on my case about making Norma a widow and those 3 boys of theirs orphans. Ritchie didn't belong in the field or in charge. He was a genius when it came to computers, but an absolute dork when it came to arresting bad guys. Once The Three Amigos were healed enough to be moved, we brought them back to Roswell. It was going to be pretty tough doing much Marshal work with a bunch of us healing up. There were The Three Amigos healing up, and Derek, Al and myself plus 2 of the cousins and almost a dozen of those new guys from town. We were just lucky all of us hadn't been killed. Very lucky indeed.

"Ritchie, I accept your resignation," I told him.

"I'm not resigning, boss," he replied.

"Fair enough," I said, "Who do you want to read your eulogy?"

"Maybe I'd better just stay here at Roswell from now on," Ritchie suggested quite spontaneously.

Stacy was as angry as a wet hen. She's ranting and raving about how we'd almost gotten killed and about how Ritchie couldn't find his way out of a paper bag with both hands and a flashlight. The only thing was she wasn't mad at Ritchie, she was mad at me. She claimed that I was the one with the most experience in these matters and I should have never given in to Ritchie. I couldn't really argue with that, now could I? So, I ended up accepting Ritchie's resignation because if I was going to catch hell it was going to be for what I did instead of what I failed to do.

It took quite a while for everyone to heal up. We were able to replace the dead horses and about 4 months later I advised my superiors that we could resume our duties. I'd taken over as the US Marshal and Ritchie stayed on as a Deputy. We didn't get any valor awards or anything because you don't get awards for being stupid. In my line of business you could be bold and you could get old but if you were old and bold it meant that you either had an angel in your pocket or the kind of luck that gamblers only dreamed about. It seemed that those old farts from Palmdale had brought me a lot of luck. Or, had they? Here I was living the quiet life in Roswell with no one the wiser as to my existence. Then we needed a doctor/dentist and I'd run into Gar-Bear at Wal-Mart and there had been nothing but problems since.

They'd barely shown up and gotten settled in when the lights went out. And that was still a topic of discussion because no one ever came up with a single terrorist. I didn't want to save the country; I wanted peace and quiet. It seemed that the only way I was going to have that was to have a heart attack and after observing Ron and Clarence, I'd rather pass. We'd spent March in the shelter and April and May keeping the peace. Then we

sat on our butts for June and during July had distributed the radios. In August we'd gone to Hobbs and got shot to hell and we spent the next 4 months healing up. Which brought us to January of 2010.

The government was working in the northern states during the spring, summer and fall of 2009 and when it got cold they'd moved down south. This put some of the troops in New Mexico, Arizona and California. They cleaned up Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Alamogordo. People who had survived those attacks moved back home in spurts and since they were major sized cities we gave them SINCGARS equipment. We told them don't call us, when we're ready, we'll call you. And here it was January and we were all healed. But when they began to reestablish the larger cities they brought in other Deputy US Marshals, limiting our duties. That suited me just fine; I was more than ready to retire.

But NO!!! Congress had refilled Rudi's Slush Fund and the CIA had finally figured out after about 9 months that our satellite tapes clearly showed Paris experiencing nuclear explosions before the French attack. Anyway, I got this call (the phones worked again and the Internet was up) and Rudi said he wanted some Arab butt. I told Mr. President Giuliani that he still had a lot of nuclear weapons left and he should just nuke the Middle East and let God sort them out. But, he wanted plausible deniability. Said he could run for a second term in 2012 but if he nuked the Middle East he'll probably only get the Jewish vote. And he wanted the vote of the Moral Majority. I told him no and he offered \$25 million a head. I told him I'd have to talk it over with the boys; that we were still healing up from that fiasco at Air Base City.

This thing with the Arabs was really with the Muslims and that was a religious matter. Did your daddy ever tell you that you shouldn't discuss politics and religion? Mine did. He said it was the surest way to start a fight. Now you take those Muslims, for example, please. There were the Sunni Muslims and the Shi'ite Muslims and depending on which country in the Middle East one went to, one group or the other would be in charge. It really wasn't any different than it was here in the states.

The United States of America has a population of about 269 million people. Eighty-three and four-tenths percent of the population is categorized as white. This includes diverse ethnic groups of varied European ancestry coming from both Europe and Latin America. Americans classified as "black" make up 12.4 percent of the population, although this group also contains many people of mixed racial background. People from various Asian ethnic groups comprise 3.3 percent of the population, and Amerindians 0.8 percent. According to 1989 figures, 56 percent of the population belong to a spectrum of Protestant denominations, 28 percent are Roman Catholic and two percent Jewish. Another four percent belong to other religions and ten percent of the population professes no religion. The figures had changed by 2010, but the shifts were small. Altogether the US had about 2,500 recognized dominations, mostly Christian. And every single one of them viewed the same God in a slightly different way. Most, but not all, of the Christian Churches in America were characterized by a belief in the Holy Trinity.

My crack about Jesus' girlfriend being a hooker really stirred the soup: 1. She was a reformed harlot; 2. She was a woman; and, most importantly 3. She was a friend of Jesus. Therefore it was correct to say that Jesus' girl-friend was a hooker. I'll tell you something else, folks, He'd be proud to claim she was His friend. A lot of people must think that girlfriend is synonymous with sex partner. I didn't say that. They did that in the movie and it wasn't very popular.

Anyway back to the matter at hand. There were a lot of objections to our taking on this contract. We didn't speak the language, we didn't look like Arabs, and we weren't in the best of condition. I agreed with the fellas and told them so. But, I felt obligated to point out how many Ayatollahs there were in the Middle East. No one would ever have to work another day in his life.

"Right," Ron snapped, "What makes you think we'd survive a suicide mission like this?"

"I'd fit right in as long as I didn't have to open my mouth," Clarence observed.

"If we're going to right a wrong, I'm for it," Gary said, "But I'm not getting involved in any religious persecution."

"We're not going to persecute them," I said, "Just torture them until we find out who did the Paris bombing and then kill them."

"That's ok then," Gary said. "John Ashcroft said it was ok to torture prisoners. But let's not take any pictures of us doing it, ok?"

We agreed on a small party of 10 men: Gary, Ron, Clarence, Al, Derek, Travis, 3 of Travis's 'cousins' and me.

"This is Paladin. I need to talk to the President," I said.

"One moment Mr. Paladin, I'll put your call right through," the operator replied.

"What's the verdict?" Rudi asked. (A Prosecutorial joke?)

"We'll do it but we need a \$25 million advance for expenses. Hang onto \$5 million and have it for us in cash, Euros," I told him.

"When can you leave?" he wanted to know.

"Just as soon as your check clears the bank," I said.

"I'll wire the money," he said, "This is urgent."

"Then as soon as your wire clears the bank," I replied. "And we need a C-17 and 3 armored Land Rovers rigged for LAPES delivery standing by at Andrews."

“Weapons?” he asked.

“Suppressed Beretta semi-auto pistols plus some suppressed MP-5N’s,” I suggested.

“Anything else?” he asked.

“We need someone who can give us 3-4 days training in enough conversational French to get by. And, we’ll need an interpreter/translator who also speaks French and you pay his salary. Plus French Passports and identification and 2 of those Russian suitcase nukes,” I insisted.

“ANYTHING ELSE?” he asked, frustrated, angry or both.

“Pick us up in that VC-20 tomorrow afternoon,” I said and hung up.

* * *

This really was going to be our last job. We would drop the cargo, climb to altitude and bail out. We could get by with 2 Land Rovers, but I wanted a spare.

“Grab your socks,” I announced, “We’re heading to Iran.”

The standard sidearm for all NATO military forces was the Beretta 92FS. We had enough of those and the suppressed MP5N’s but we might as well pick up some new ones. We would supply our own M1A’s because they were already sighted in and couldn’t be come by quickly. We’d be using the HP Black Hills 175gr BTHP Match ammo for the M1A’s. We’d be traveling light and constantly. I wanted to be in and out in less than a week. The only non-regulation French gear besides the M1A’s would be those Bowie knives.

We left the Roswell airport shortly after 15:00 local the next afternoon. We arrived at Andrews late that night and sacked out in the VBOQ. The next few mornings, we went to the NCO mess hall and headed back to the hanger, per instructions. For the next 4 days we received intensive training in conversational French, received our papers, the Euros and got a quick bit of training on the nukes. Someone noticed our knives and replaced them with Cold Steel Gurkha Kukri knives. We got checked out on the satellite radios in the Land Rovers on the way to Iran. The Agency had supplied the interpreter/translator and he was fluent in Farsi, Arabic, French and English. He also knew how to operate the Russian nukes. Tehran was GMT + 3:30 and we adjusted our watches on the way.

The Agency man also had a list of names and their whereabouts that was less than 24-hours old when we departed. I vaguely remembered the guy and from what I could remember, he was very, very good. I should have requested one interpreter/translator for each of the Rovers, but it hadn’t occurred to me. It turns out this guy was the only one

available anyway. After a flight that took hours, we were alerted that we should jump first and set up 4 locator beacons. The Air Force preferred to drop the Rovers after we were safely on the ground. This flight carried 2 loadmasters and it took all three of us to push The Three Amigos off the back ramp. Derek, Al and Travis jumped next followed by the 3 cousins and then by the Agency guy and me.

We all landed safely and set up the beacons. The C-17 came in at barely 5' AGL and LAPES delivered the 3 Rovers. The Agency guy, Travis, Al and I were in the lead vehicle. The Three Amigos and Derek were in the second and the 3 cousins were tail end Charlie. We were about 200 Klicks east of Tehran. The Land Rovers were English with the wheel on the right side, in case I didn't mention it earlier. We made Tehran just after they'd completed morning prayers.

The Agency was running a small operation in Tehran and as fast as they could round up the names on the list, we began the interrogations. It wasn't pretty and within a scant 3 days we had the complete story on the Paris bombing. Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei and 9 others on the Secretariat of the Imam together with President Ali Mohammed Khatami were behind the bombings. They, together with the 22 members of the Office of the President, some 14 members of the Supreme Council for National Security and 21 members of the Cabinet were expected to gather in 3 days to present medals to the 4 terrorists who had handled the Paris bombings. Gary had to do the math. $10 + 1 + 22 + 14 + 21 + 4 = 72$. 72 times \$25 million was \$1,800 million dollars or \$180 million dollars for each of the 10 of us. I had told Rudi that he should have bombed the Middle East; it obviously would have been cheaper.

On the night before the presentation, we planted both Russian nukes, set the timers and turned them on. We, together with the Agency fellas, hightailed it out of there for our rendezvous with the C-17 in about 4 hours. This time the C-17 landed and they quickly loaded the Land Rovers and we got airborne. We headed straight back to Andrews and landed under great secrecy. During the flight, the Agency guy faxed the 'hit list' to the DCI and he delivered it to Rudi. When we landed we were handed checks for \$180 million each and hurried aboard the VC-20 with all of our gear. It had taken almost exactly one week. A lot more than 72 people died; estimates put the losses at anywhere from 1-3 million. See, Rudi got a bargain. And, guess who got blamed? It was a tossup between the French and Al-Qaeda. They bombed Paris but Al-Qaeda had supplied the stolen nukes to Iran in the first place and surviving Iranian government officials knew it.

In summary, this was the best contract I/we ever had. In the first place we had virtually no expenses. Rudi had supplied the weapons (we kept them) and we'd had free transportation between Roswell and Andrews. We ate in the mess hall and stayed in the VBOQ, free of charge. We got the Cold Steel Gurkha Kukri knives for free and had kept them. The Air Force provided non-stop transportation to and from Iran. We didn't have to pay the Agency people and the money was 'tax-free' because the expense was buried so deeply that a Congressional Investigation couldn't find it if they looked for 100 years.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 30 – Semi-Retirement

“I’m sure glad he invited us to move to New Mexico,” Gary said. “I can buy cigarettes now regardless what they cost.”

“What are you going to do with all of the money?” Ron asked.

“I haven’t decided,” Gary replied. “The Mexican jobs gave me a little over \$7 million (\$49,550,000 divided 7 ways). I think it would be pretty hard to spend \$187 million, but I could try.”

“We could always give it to our wives,” Ron suggested. “We’d be back to poor in no time at all.”

“They never sold that other silo, how about we buy it and fix it up?” Gary suggested. “We each got \$187 million, so how about we each donate \$12 million to a pool and live off the interest on the \$175 million.”

“I don’t want to be living in a hole in the ground with 800 people,” Clarence said.

“We wouldn’t be,” Gary said. “Add it all up. There’s you and Lucy, your 3 kids and spouses plus your 8 grandchildren, that’s 16. There’s Ron and Linda and their 5 kids and 2 spouses and 2 grandchildren, that’s 11. Finally, there’s Sharon and me, our 4 kids and their 2 spouses and my 13 grandchildren, that’s 21. We’d only have 48 people in the shelter.”

“That wouldn’t be too bad,” Ron observed. “I expect we could build small apartments in the silo. How many do you think we need?”

“4 for Clarence’s family, 6 for your family and 5 for mine,” Gary replied. “Fifteen, Ron.”

“We could put 2 to a floor and have 8 floors of apartments,” Clarence suggested.

“David and Lorrie have a pretty large family (7),” Gary observed. “I think they’ll need a floor by themselves. We can do without the crowding in this silo like Paladin had in his.”

“How are we going to talk our wives into this?” Clarence asked.

“Oh, darn,” Ron said, “I knew it was too good to be true.”

“Well, as much as it pains me to be deceptive,” Gary laughed, “I don’t think I’m going to tell Sharon everything. I’ll just tell her we bought some property and we’re going to move the houses.”

The 3 old geezers had deposited those checks into special accounts at the local banks and they weren’t joint accounts. The accounts were in one of their assumed names and

they had made a show of giving their wives a portion of the money, like the interest only. Even at that, there was no shortage of cash floating around. Sharon had gone whole hog on quilting equipment and Linda had starting buying more of those Indian Dolls that Sharon had gotten her started collecting. Lucy just tucked her money away, probably to give to the kids and grandkids.

They bought the silo and hired contractors to completely refurbish it. The silo was gutted and 15 floors were installed. A pair of standby generators went into the bottom of the silo. The top 8 stories were apartments, one floor was a day room/cafeteria and the remaining 6 floors were used for storage. All of this was done out of sight of their wives and they hadn't yet announced the move. They got away with it, too. Do you have any idea how much income \$175 million generates in a year? Almost \$2 million in an ordinary savings account and our boys weren't that stupid.

They'd told me what they had going and had sworn me to secrecy. Hell, I didn't even tell Stacy for fear she'd let something slip. What I did instead was buy myself a second silo and have it refurbished on the sly. I'd have told Ritchie, but he'd have told Norma and Norma would have told Stacy. I put up \$40 million, we had money to burn, and I used the same contractors The Three Amigos used. With that kind of money to spend, we went first class, I can tell you that. Rather than move the houses, The Three Amigos had just bought triplewides for them and their families. Sounded good to me and I did the same. Then those old boys put in a concrete barn. You heard me right, a concrete barn. I only had a string of 5 horses so I got together with them and we just made the barn a little bigger. They'd board my livestock for the same amount I'd charged them. But, I would hire a guy from town to muck out the stalls and feed the animals, because I wasn't shoveling any manure.

When everything was finally ready, they told their families and I told Stacy. That was in early October 2010. Ritchie was still peeved at me over the demotion but he was so busy trying to make money now that the net was back up that we didn't really have time to argue about it. I told him he could run the business and just send me a check for my share of the profits, if any. Understand, from what I could see we had lots of business, but he'd gone and installed the OC-12 line and the expenses were eating us alive. He had so much capacity that he opened up a second business as an ISP. The Three Amigos had a T-3 line installed that ran \$2,000 a month and I went with a T-1. The thing that was nice about it was that the amigos put in their own automated call center in the shelter and everyone had private phone lines and high-speed Internet service.

We weren't doing any Marshaling these days even though we still carried the badges. We hadn't necessarily hung up our guns, but were at least semi-retired. When the government finally reopened the Roswell Marshal's office everyone but the 11 of us had transferred over to that office. I decided to put up Travis and his 3 'cousins' at our place instead of hiring the guy from town. I got together with Clarence, Ron and Gary and we hired the 4 men to take care of our livestock and keep up the grounds. We had to keep the team together as much as possible, you never knew when something might come up and things would go to hell in a hurry.

Ronald was born in '41, Clarence in '42 and Gary in '43. I was born in '50 and in late fall of 2010 when we finally moved, we were getting long in the tooth, they more than I. Come spring, Ron would be 70-years-old. The older Ron got, the mellower he became and the older Gary got the more he acted like the old Ron. Clarence was 'mellow yellow'. And me? Well I was retired and I just didn't want to be bothered. With a little over 20 acres between us Travis suggested that we put in some cattle, hogs and poultry. Gary said that he liked the idea and we could expand that concrete barn to include a chicken coop and a place for the hogs and milk cows.

Between you and me, I didn't see the point. We could get milk and eggs in Roswell and in the event of a problem we had lots of food in storage. I put in 4 triplewides for Travis and his 'cousins' and fixed up 5 apartments in my silo. I was just getting old, I guess. Besides, after the French had all but wiped out the country, what else could happen? Pundits had claimed for years that a nuclear war would be the end of civilization, as we knew it. The pundits were wrong, of course, but it did change a lot of things. The Swiss became the dominant nation in Europe and our little trip to Tehran had really stirred the soup. The religious mix in Iran was mostly Shi'ite, the same as the repressed majority in Iraq.

Shi'a Muslims continue to hold the same fundamental beliefs of other Muslims, with the principle addition being that they also believe in an imamate, which is the distinctive institution of Shi'a Islam. The doctrine of the imamate was not fully developed until the tenth century, and other dogmas developed still later.

Sunni Muslims view the caliph as a temporal leader only and consider an imam to be a prayer leader, but for the Shi'a the historic caliphs were merely de facto rulers, while the rightful and true leadership continued to be passed along through a sort of apostolic succession of Muhammad's descendants, the Imams (when capitalized, Imam refers to the Shi'a descendant of the House of Ali).

When the Saud family's rebellion was defeated, many assumed that Wahhabi Islam would fade away or simply become another obscure sect. However, it gained renewed importance under the leadership of Abd al-Aziz in Saud, a new Arabian leader who allied himself with Wahhabi militants known as the Ikhwan. This time the rebellion against the Ottoman Turks was supported by Western powers who were involved in World War I, where Turkey was allied with Germany.

Today, Wahhabism is the dominant Islamic tradition on the Arabian Peninsula, though its influence is greatly reduced in the rest of the Middle East. As Osama bin Laden comes from Saudi Arabia and is Wahhabi himself, Wahhabi extremism and radical ideas of purity have obviously influenced him considerably. Adherents of Wahhabi Islam do not regard it as simply one school of thought out of many; rather it is the only path of true Islam – nothing else really counts.

After Gary explained that to me one day, when we were sitting around drinking lemonade and smoking cigars in the early spring of 2011, I realized that what was needed was to start a war among the Muslims. There were 11 major divisions but 2 weren't considered Muslim by the Muslims. Gary said it would never work and I thought about Iraq and Iran and their 8-year war. On the other hand, I was retired and really enjoying my retirement. More often than not we'd all pile in a Hummer and head to a lake or river just to go fishing. I gave The Three Amigos 2 of the Hummers, one with an Mk-19 and one with a Ma Deuce. I kept one of each for myself and let Ritchie keep the rest.

The weapons were stored in the shelter armories and if we carried a gun, more often than not it was a Winchester or sometimes a .45 revolver. When I did carry my Colt I used the rig without the paladin because I wanted to put all of that behind me. The first major attack by terrorists against the United States had been the WTC in '93. The second by external terrorists came in '01. The third attack, attributed to terrorists but never proven, came in what, 2005 or 2006? Guess the memory is fading, just like Gary's. The fourth attack didn't come directly against the United States but against France. For the damage it eventually caused, we'd have been better off if it had been against the US.

I figured that Rudi would probably get reelected in 2012 and we wouldn't have to worry about the Democrats until 2016. Then, sure as hell, they'd get the White House because that just seemed to be the natural scheme of things. We'd still be ok unless they got Congress. Then who could know what would happen, they'd probably outlaw air rifles. Wouldn't bother us any, a person just wasn't allowed to own some of the things we had on hand.

A lot of money had gone into filling those 2½-million gallon diesel tanks. Considering the price of fuel these days, only a millionaire could even consider it. And, The Three Amigos and I decided that we could get by with smaller generators, too. Who needed 1¼ Mw? We put in a pair of DSHAD 209kw generators that only used 17gph at full power in each silo. One was primary and one was the backup. 2.5 million gallons of diesel would last 147,059 hours, 6,127.5 days or 16.8 years. We topped that off with as much food as we could store and I suppose we had a 10-year or longer supply. In fact, just about enough food to last us for as long as our generation would live.

We traded horses and brought in a younger set. This time on advice of some folks who knew, the geezers went with Tennessee Walking Horses. A light horse breed founded in middle Tennessee, the Tennessee Walking Horse was a composition of Narragansett and Canadian Pacer, Standardbred, Thoroughbred, Morgan, and American Saddlebred stock. Originally bred as a utility horse, this breed was an ideal mount for riders of all ages and levels of experience. The breed easily adapted to English or Western gear, and its calm, docile temperament combined with naturally smooth and easy gaits insured the popularity of the Tennessee Walking Horse as the "world's greatest show, trail, and pleasure horse". I figured that they knew more about it than I, so I did the same. There was a horse for every man, woman and child at both silos, for family and employees.

We also had a string of mules, 12 or 14; it slips my mind at the moment, some broke to harness and the rest to pack. Breeding a male donkey to a female horse resulted in a mule; breeding a male horse to a female donkey produced a hinny. Offspring from either cross, although fully developed as males or females, were almost always sterile. Hence, a line of horses and a line of domestic donkeys must be maintained to perpetuate mule or hinny production. Anyway we had maybe a half dozen of the draft mules and the remainder was what they called work/pack mules. We bought them as they came; only specifying size. Travis suggested that we get some Jacks and Jennies to keep the breed alive. Then he got to breeding those Jacks to the Tennessee Walking horses and we ended up with a string of what would turn out to be fast walking mules.

At the time, it didn't seem to be too important. Neither did Travis's instance that we maintain bulls, boars and roosters. The November election in 2012 saw Rudi reelected, just like I thought. Man he was playing on a string of successes. John Gotti, the Mexican Cartels and the fact that there was peace in the Middle East, thanks to the French or Osama bin Laden. The US didn't have a single soldier stationed on foreign soil. With the rebuilding of the country and the shortage of materials, inflation began to set in. But the Democrats couldn't convince the people that we were headed for economic trouble. The Fed kept raising interest rates trying to bring inflation down just like they'd lowered interest rates during Bush's first term to foster growth.

The amigos income just kept going up and Gary mentioned that he was taking most of the money after taxes and buying gold and silver. He said that all 3 of them were and he was right because that's how Stacy and I had made so much money, playing the market and buying and selling gold. And now that we had money to burn she and I talked it over and got into gold in a big way. Gary said that he could remember when the Dow Jones Industrial averages were \$912 and insisted that it could happen again in his lifetime. The markets had suspended trading for a very long time after the French attack. When they'd reopened, stocks had been at ½ of their former levels. But, with the inflationary trend, prices had started to rise.

Just after the election of 2012 and before the holidays, there were reports on the news of a new strain of influenza. We went over to Ritchie's silo and got everyone vaccinated, having gotten busy and put it off. Then, a lot of people began getting sick and the CDC said that they were looking into it but weren't sure what was going on. The market reacted predictably and for every day for 2 weeks running they ended up suspending trading. None of us wanted to get the bug so everyone stayed pretty close to home. Anyway, traveling was miserable, even the short way to Roswell because of the winter storms. It got into the schools and Stacy pulled the girls out and hired a tutor. The next thing you know, Gary, Ron's and Clarence's grandchildren were pulled out and the 3 men got together and hired 2 teachers.

Old Gar-Bear had done the hiring and he'd hired two single women in their 20's. One was a blonde and the other a redhead. I had the impression that he didn't just hire them for their brains; they sure were easy to look at. Since the tutor that Stacy had hired was also a licensed teacher we got the 3 women together had set up a private school. That

was in early December. Every day the network and cable news had new information about the flu epidemic and the effects it was having on the country. So many people were out sick that they closed the markets and the utility companies had to resort to having supervisor's keep the utilities up and running. We didn't give it any thought at the time because we were snug there in our rural setting away from the crowds.

Then Sharon wanted to go to some Quilting Convention or something and rather than fight with her, Gary gave in and let her go. Instead of her returning 3 days later, Gary got a call that she was in a hospital. That was in January. The show was called 'The Road to California' and it had been held in Ontario and she was in Loma Linda. I called Ritchie and explained the problem and asked him politely to work some of his magic and get Gary set up with a jet from Roswell to San Bernardino. Ritchie said he'd give a college try but 2 things were against him from the start. The weather was in the crapper and he wasn't sure he could find a pilot who wasn't sick. I told him thanks for the thought and got on the phone to Washington. I figured we had a favor or two coming. We did. The Commander-in-Chief called SecDef and the next thing you knew there was a Tomcat in bound for Roswell.

Doc came by and told Gary that he'd better wear one of those N-100 masks because from what he was seeing this flu was very contagious. We managed to get Gary to the airport and he got all dressed up in a g-suit, parachute and oxygen mask and boarded the F-14. The pilot took off in a hurry because another storm front was moving in. It was about 640 NM from Roswell to San Bernardino and the F-14, Gary later told me, made the trip at about mach 1.7. Ritchie had a car waiting for Gary at the San Bernardino airport and he arrived at Loma Linda just in time to tell Sharon goodbye. The Tomcat was refueled and waiting for Gary at the airport. He said that by prior agreement between Sharon and him, her body would be cremated and her ashes returned. We held a small memorial service and the two new school teachers were quite a comfort to old Gar-Bear. One held each arm and they supported him through the dreadful affair.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 31 – A Spring in His Step

It seems that Gary had converted a lot of his money; \$100 million to be exact, into gold while the price was down. He divided those \$100,000,000 dollars 4 ways and gave each of the children their share. He told them if there was any left when he died, they could fight over it but this way, each of them had more than they could use. I think it was just a tax dodge to avoid inheritance taxes, but what do I know? Anyway, the rumor was that old Gar-bear was keeping company with those schoolteachers. I didn't believe it for a minute because Gary was 70 years old.

"I wonder how much longer those 2 teachers are going to last?" Stacy asked me.

"What do you mean, honey?" I asked.

"They've been coming in late and are tired to the bone," she said. "I don't think they've been getting much sleep."

"What's behind that?" I asked.

"Come here and I'll show you," she answered.

* * *

Well if that was what was behind it, I didn't figure Gary would last much longer. In fact I wasn't sure that I was up for a lot of those demonstrations. Gary sure did seem to have a spring in his step; he must have tried a new vitamin. He didn't seem to be so grumpy anymore either. As of late, he'd been wearing those nickel-plated guns, too. He'd gotten a call that Sharon's ashes were ready and he told them to ship them UPS ground.

Meanwhile, around the country the flu epidemic was getting far worse. It was turning out to be about as deadly as SARS. Ritchie issued an edict that none of the people from the trailer park was to go into Roswell or anywhere near other people. Sharon had been vaccinated and it sure hadn't helped her. Then since his kids couldn't go to town, he came over and asked if they could attend our private school. I figured why the hell not and suggested to him that we put in another apartment in our silo and he move his trailer over to our place. He said that some of those people were sneaking into Roswell anyway and that might be a good idea. One of the residents could run the trailer park for us and he'd move most of his equipment to my command center. I got some of the men from that contractor to equip another apartment for Ritchie and Norma and he put a big rush on getting everything moved to the command center. Well, not everything; the phone company couldn't move that OC3 line so he left the ISP at the other silo. I told him he was just going to have to make do with my 2 T-1 lines because if they couldn't move his lines, they couldn't add more for me. Did I forget to mention that all of this had happened in the 2 weeks since Sharon died?

It was around the first of February 2013 with a lot of people sick all over the country. People hadn't started to die in any great number, but they were not getting over the flu. The US had rebuilt most but not all of the hospitals after the nuclear attack and there weren't any available hospital beds. It was frustrating but there wasn't a thing we could do except watch the nightly news and commiserate about how the US had been through enough. What we didn't know and wasn't being reported was that this 'little' epidemic wasn't confined to the United States. The CDC announced that the illness was a virus and it couldn't be treated with antibiotics. Most of the people who contracted the 'flu' experienced serious symptoms for an extended period of up to a month. Then, they got well or died. In a few rare cases, there were reports of people with compromised immune systems succumbing to the illness in a matter of 2-3 days.

"You know, boss," Ritchie said, "It's getting pretty ugly out there. I expect that we're going to lose power any day."

"If the power goes down, we'll probably lose the phones too," I observed. "What are you going to do if the Internet goes down?"

"I was thinking that I'd go back to being a Marshal," he replied.

The weather was about like what it had been in late 2004-early 2005, lots of rain on the west coast and snow further inland. It was too cold to be outside for very long and there was too much snow to move around much. Because of the flu epidemic, many of the DOT workers were off sick and the roads weren't getting cleared. This was both good and bad. It was good because few people ventured forth to challenge the elements and the slippery roads. At the same time it was bad because emergency vehicles like the law enforcement, ambulances and firefighting equipment couldn't move either. The fire trucks were the most successful due to the size of the trucks and the chains on their wheels. Governors in several states had already issued warnings to avoid travel, except in an absolute emergency. January had been awful and had it not been for the weather, that virus might have gotten more. Sharon had managed to get out on one of the few commuter flights in time for the quilting show.

"I really don't believe that any of us are going to get outside and do any law enforcement Ritchie," I expressed an opinion. "I assume that Norma and you got everything moved?"

"Yes we did, boss," he answered, "Say how did you manage to get a foundation put in for our triplewide with the weather the way it has been?"

"I put in an extra foundation when we built the place," I explained. "Being around you and The Three Amigos has really gotten me into being prepared."

"I hear that Gary has a new girlfriend," he smiled.

“Two, Ritchie,” I grinned, “He’s been messing around with the new school teachers. They’re worn out and he’s as happy as a clam.”

“How does the old guy do...” Ritchie began to ask. At that moment the alarms went off indicating that the generator was kicking in. The emergency lights flicked on and ran until the generator was stabilized and the power was restored.

“How does he do it?” I completed his sentence. “I asked Ron about that and he said that he was pretty sure he knew but refused to talk about it further,” I explained. “I guess you were right about the power. Do you think the storm took a line down or the blackout is more widespread?”

Ritchie picked up a phone and dialed a number.

“Hi honey it’s me,” he said. “No, I don’t know, but the generator kicked in so it could be anything. Yeah, ok, I’ll be home in about an hour. Boss, the phones work so it wasn’t an EMP. Norma said the streetlights were on until the power went down and now they’re all off.”

I turned on the TV and the announcer was talking about an outage of undetermined origin leaving a small portion of east central New Mexico temporarily without power. The power company, he said, was checking into the cause of the outage and they’d have more news when the power company called them back. We were watching station KSWO in Lubbock, TX, the one that the townspeople had borrowed those 2 generators from. They said they would be back after the break with weather news so we left the TV on. When they came back on, it was with a severe storm warning. Here in Roswell, we could get up to a foot of snow.

“Do you think we should get everyone into the shelter?” I asked Ritchie. “We are already over the average annual snowfall of a foot.”

February 5, 1988... Roswell, NM was buried under 16.5 inches of snow in 24 hours, an all-time record for that location.

“It might not hurt,” he said. “I’ll call Travis and have him restock the automatic livestock feeders and come on in.”

“I’ll give Ron a call and tell him we’re bundling up and the animals are taken care of,” I responded.

I tried Ron’s house and got no answer so I tried the silo. I got no answer there and decided to try Clarence. Clarence didn’t answer and I was beginning to wonder where everyone had gone. I tried the silo a second time.

“Ron Green,” Ron answered.

“Paladin, Ron, I just called to tell you that with the weather forecast we’re going into the shelter,” I explained. “Ritchie is talking to Travis and they’ll restock the automatic feeders before they come in.”

“We decided to do the same thing,” Ron said. “Everyone is here except Gary and Mutt and Jeff.”

“Who are Mutt and Jeff?” I asked.

“Mutt is the blonde and Jeff is the redhead,” Ron replied.

“How is Gary these days?” I inquired.

“Looking 60 and acting 40,” Ron responded. “But it will all catch up to him.”

“We are forecast for up to 12,” I reported.

“We caught that on the Lubbock station,” Ron remarked. “That’s a lot of snow on top of what we already have. I don’t suppose they’ll have the highways plowed for weeks.”

“Probably not,” I agreed. “Call if you need anything.”

“Yeah, talk to you later, ciao,” Ron replied.

I went to the cafeteria and made a cup of cocoa and sat down in front of the fireplace. Each floor had a fireplace as a source of heat. I had them install the Eastlake 36 Inch, 5,000 BTU Electric Fireplace’s instead of heaters. Made the place feel almost homey.

“Hey boss, check out the Lubbock station on the TV,” Ritchie hollered.

The National Weather Service has updated its earlier forecast, the announcer said. The Lubbock area and east central New Mexico are now forecast to get up to 18” of snow. In other matters, the CDC announced earlier today that the flu epidemic appears to be worldwide. Europe and the United States have been the worst hit with an additional 47,000 cases reported in the past 24-hours. The worst previous epidemic of these proportions hit in the year 1918. During the 1918-1919 fall period the number of Americans who died from influenza is estimated at 675,000. Of those, almost 200,000 deaths were recorded in the month of October 1918 alone. Worldwide, the mortality figure for the full pandemic was believed to stand somewhere between 30 to 40 million. In 1997 epidemiologists and public health officials from around the world got their first glimpse of an entirely new variety of human influenza. Known as subtype H5N1 for the surface proteins, which the virus carries, the new strain had only ever previously been observed in birds. Ominously, the effect of H5N1 on poultry had earned it the evocative title of ‘Chicken Ebola.’ And when it surfaced in the human population of Hong Kong during 2003 it proved to be almost as deadly.

The CDC went on to say that they haven't yet identified the particular strain in this year's virus but that the flu shots administered to people earlier this year are not resistant to the H5N1 Strain. If the virus proves to be that strain or even a more virulent strain, they report that it could be months before a vaccine is ready. As most of you probably know, the United States imported most of its flu vaccine from Europe. The CDC says that bringing American production of a virus online must wait until the strain is identified and production can begin. Even then, it could take at least 5 months before enough vaccine is available for the American public as a whole. In other news Xcel Energy issued a brief statement today citing a lack of personnel for the loss of power in the area. As you know station KSWB has emergency generation facilities and will be able to remain on the air for the foreseeable future.

"Hey Ritchie," I yelled.

"I heard boss," Ritchie said coming into the cafeteria. "We have the line heaters on for the diesel fuel and Norma, Stacy and the other ladies will be in a little later to start dinner."

I figured that if we did get 18" of snow, as forecast, everything in the area would grind to a halt for at least a month until enough people could get well to man the snowplows and clear the roads. As I mentioned earlier, I wasn't particularly concerned. We had enough fuel to run the generators for several years and enough food to feed everyone for as long as we had electricity. We could hold out in the shelter until summer, if need be.

"Hey Ritchie, did you think to check with the people over at the trailer park?" I asked.

"No, I only called Travis," he replied, "I thought that you were going to do it."

"Well I didn't, so give the other silo a call and find out if they moved to the shelter," I suggested.

More recently, Ritchie had been much more amenable to my 'suggestions'. About ½ hour later he came back and informed me that they hadn't moved to the shelter but were beginning to. One floor had been set up by the Doc as an isolation ward because of the number of cases of flu they had among the residents. The ventilation systems in the first silo had been designed with various antibacterial and antiviral safeguards, but they had never really been tested. I hoped that Doc had sense enough to put the ill persons on the highest floor in the silo so that others wouldn't have to come in contact with them. They had more than enough diesel fuel for their generators and about a 2-year supply of food so, if they could get through the flu epidemic, they should be ok.

You know what happened next, right? The phones went down. It wasn't that critical because all three shelters were fully equipped with radios, but it was one more thing to be concerned about. About 10 days later the weather finally cleared enough for us to get to the first silo and to Roswell and see how everyone was doing. All we had were some of

the protective Tyvek radiation suits and some N-100 masks, so I limited the trip to 4 of us: Ritchie, Travis, a 'cousin' and me. First stop was The Three Amigos shelter and everyone there was fine. Gary was sitting in the cafeteria drinking coffee and looking the best I'd seen him look in all the time I'd known him.

"You're looking well," I commented.

"Feel good too," he said. "Sort of caught up for lost time."

"I heard you had a couple of honeys," I smiled.

"Had is right," he said, "They both quit their school teaching jobs and bugged out earlier today."

"Wear them out did you?" I asked.

"Gee, do you think so?" he asked. "Nah, they were just a couple of gold diggers and I learned about gold diggers the hard way a few years ago. I paid a pretty dear price to learn about gold diggers and bimbos; I should have listened to Ron, but I didn't. I saw Mutt and Jeff's agenda early on and just got all I could get without making any promises. Got real snippy when I told them I had no intentions of getting remarried. Then this morning they told me I had to choose so I told them that I chose to remain single. They packed their bags and lit out on foot through 30" of snow. You know, when a woman is trying to hook you they are very liberal in their views. But once they got you, it becomes a whole different story. So, I'll rest up and wait for someone else to try and get my \$75 million. I'm 70 years old, you know."

"We've got to run into town and over to the shelter at the trailer park," I said.

"Stay the hell out of town, my friend, they got the flu real bad," he said. "As far as the other silo goes, if it were me, I'd call them on the SINCGARS and talk to the Doc or whoever is in charge over there. This is a bad one; it killed Sharon in 3 days."

"Somewhere I got the impression that Sharon and you weren't that close," I observed.

"We loved each other but at times I think we couldn't stand each other if you know what I mean," he replied somewhat mournfully.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 32 – A Long Hard Spring

Whether or not I agreed with Gary was irrelevant. I presumed his views were based on his experiences and everyone's experiences varied. And people respond to grief in different ways. I took his suggestion and we avoided town and called the other silo on the CB radio. I couldn't talk to Doc, but a message was relayed that they were getting by and Doc had quarantined the shelter for the moment. Travis checked on the animals and refilled the automatic feeders. He'd replaced the hoppers on the feeders with something much larger that could hold up to 30-days' worth of food and the feeders had electric timers that dispensed the food at regular intervals preventing the horses from getting colic. After they'd mucked out the barn, he and the 'cousins' returned to the shelter.

"Bill," Travis said, "We ought to get a snowplow and clear the snow off the roads between the shelters."

"That's a good idea," I said. "We didn't go into Roswell; I wonder how they're doing."

"I heard one or two of those locomotives that they use for generators running," Travis replied, "So some of them came through all right."

"Just avoid the people if you go get a snowplow," I suggested, "I don't want you bringing any bugs back here."

TV station KSWs was still on the air but that was looking like it might become an issue. They were down to a couple of announcers and they looked like they'd been sleeping in their clothes.

"The Associated Press reports that the CDC in Atlanta has issued a press statement in which they report to have isolated the mechanism at work in the flu virus sweeping the world. It is a variant of the H5N1 '97 Hong Kong virus with new and far more lethal components. According to the statement, studies are underway to develop an antibody, which will lead to development of a vaccine. The CDC estimates that it could take as long as 2 months to complete the study and another 4-6 months to have a vaccine. Their efforts have been hampered by the effects of the disease on the population.

"President Rudi Giuliani held a news conference today where he spoke to reporters in the White House briefing room. He urged citizens who are not involved in the distribution of essential services to remain in their homes. He recapped the CDC report and indicated that the best way to control spread of the illness was to avoid human contact. People involved in the supply of critical services are urged to use N-95 or N-100 masks and limit interactions with other people. Giuliani also indicated that the flu is far more widespread than initially believed and that Europe has been badly hit as well as several third world countries.

"In other news, the power outages experienced in the immediate area have spread to other areas of the country, presumably because of the influenza outbreak. The Penta-

gon has announced that soldiers equipped with protective gear are being moved into the areas to restore power and other utilities.

“As indicated in earlier broadcasts, this station has backup power and can remain on the air for an extended period. Unfortunately most of the station staff has been affected by the flu outbreak and we are currently running on a skeleton crew. We will remain on the air as long as possible. I apologize for my appearance, but with just 2 of us to assemble and report the news we have been forced to remain at the station. If anyone out there has a pizza, this reporter would be more than willing to cover the delivery charges. We will continue our substitute programming of reruns and will have additional news at the top of the hour.”

I felt sorry for the guy but with the roads the way they were, there was nothing we could do from Roswell to help them out with food. It was a 4-hour drive to Lubbock when the roads were clear, a distance of about 175 miles. We had tried to raise the folks in Roswell on the CB's, the police radios and the SINCGARS, but we hadn't had any response. But at night, we could see lights on in town so it didn't necessarily mean anything. On the other hand, the lights being on didn't necessarily mean that all was well, either. Roswell had several locomotives permanently situated on a siding next to a large diesel fuel storage facility and once the locomotives were running and the backup power organized, they ran pretty much unattended.

The name of this game was isolation for the moment. It was a shame about those 2 schoolteachers but if that was the way they were behaving, Lord knows what they were teaching the kids. We still had the teacher Stacy had hired and Jennifer and Paula could fill in for Gary's bimbos so we could keep the classes going. Speaking of Gary, it appeared to me as if he had lost some more weight. Normally he ran about 155-160 but when I visited with him earlier, it looked like he had lost maybe 20 pounds. But, he had said something about lifting weights so maybe he had lost the weight that way. The next day I went by their silo and visited with Ron.

“It looks to me like Gary has been losing weight,” I commented.

“Diet and exercise, Paladin,” Ron replied. “He only eats light meals and has his diabetes under control for the first time in a long time,” Ron related. “Been lifting weights a little to build his upper body strength. He told me that he was feeling pretty good and had his blood pressure and blood sugar within normal limits and that his neuropathy was even a little better. He's been in the recreation room practicing his fast draw.”

“Really, is he getting faster?” I asked.

“I wouldn't go up against him,” Ron smiled. “He's changed. For an old man, he's lean and mean and pretty dang fast. Of course, he always had a fascination with those old single action revolvers. But that crossdraw holster with the short-barreled Vaquero has allowed him to improve his speed some. The thing is, having lost the weight, he looks

like warmed over death and most people wouldn't give him a second glance. They probably wonder how he even manages to keep standing."

"How are you feeling?" I asked.

"Fair to middling," he answered. "Clarence is doing well, too. I hate to say it but once the snow clears away, I think we may have some Marshaling business for a while. Lots of people got sick and I'd guess there's a shortage of supplies everywhere. And, if there's a shortage of supplies it means people will be out and about helping themselves."

"Ron that's the downside to being prepared," I remarked. "We're isolated from the great mass of humanity, warm and snug in our silos and it not only makes us a target for people who have less or none, but it separates us from what is really going on out there."

"I think we'll find out soon enough," he grimaced.

By the end of March the snow had started to melt off and the roads became passable in our Hummers. We finally established contact with Roswell and they'd lost about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the local population to the flu. Once they realized what they were up against, they'd quickly isolated the sick. All said and done, about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the town had gotten sick and $\frac{1}{2}$ of them had died. The other half recovered after about 30 days of severe symptoms. That seemed to be the pattern of this pandemic. Yeah, the TV managed to stay on the air and the CDC in Atlanta was now calling this a pandemic and said the death toll from the flu had proportionally been one of the worst epidemics the world had ever seen. About $\frac{1}{2}$ of Europe had succumbed to the illness. The experience in the third world countries was about the same as in the States with $\frac{2}{3}$ of the population getting sick and half of the sick dying.

The CDC had finally developed a vaccine and it would be ready for mass distribution for the coming fall. As usual, it would contain antiviral agents for the 3 most likely suspected flu varieties. We started making patrols as the roads permitted and as we could get to the larger cities, reestablished the system that we had earlier of mutual aid and calling us in when the going got tough.

The population of the United States was growing, negatively. The power outage had taken a few lives, mostly people dependent on electricity. Then the war had taken a lot more. Even more had died during the brief period of lawlessness that followed the war. Before all of the problems, the population of the US had been around 300 million. But, if I were to hazard a guess, I expect the population could easily be down to 150 million or even less, maybe only 100 million. You couldn't really tell what the population of the country was based on New Mexico because New Mexico was a bit off the beaten path.

"Tell the President that it's Paladin," I said. I was on a SINGARS radio because the phone service hadn't been restored.

“How are things in New Mexico, Paladin?” he asked about 15 minutes later when they finally got him on the horn.

“We haven’t been out much sir,” I replied. “Roswell had about $\frac{2}{3}$ get sick and half of them died.”

“The Army tells me the phones will be back on in a few days,” he said. “Is my special Marshal Service intact?”

“Yes sir,” I replied, “Do you need us to do anything?”

“Keep an eye on that part of the country for the next month or so and then I’ll bring you boys into Washington once the power and phones are up,” he instructed. “Same rules you operated under the last time we had an emergency. Judge Parker make it through ok?”

“I’m sorry Mr. President, we haven’t heard,” I told him.

“See you fellas in a month or so,” he said and cut the connection.

It turns out that Judge Parker had gotten sick, but survived. His illness hadn’t improved his disposition. Rudi hadn’t said anything about the population of the country or how many people were left alive. I guess as far as he was concerned, it didn’t matter, he couldn’t get reelected for another term. As it was, he would end up serving just short of 10 years as the President. Anyway I rounded up the fellas and the Marshals from town who had survived plus some new men so that we were back up to full strength, 26 men. Call me sexist, but I didn’t want any women on the team. The ladies could arm themselves and protect the home areas. There is always something about a woman with a gun protecting her children that was reassuring. We’d seen some of it after the war and these women tended to shoot first and ask questions later.

We had “US Marshals” painted on the sides of our Hummers and the horse trailers in large letters just to keep the women from shooting us. When the men saw the badges and guns, they tended to be more trusting, but not the women. They had more to lose than the men, like their virtue. And you put a short-barreled shotgun in the hands of a woman who’d maybe been raped or had her children attacked and she tended to be more than a little untrusting. When I mentioned it to Stacy she said it was my own fault. Those women, she said, would be more trusting if we had a woman along in each Hummer. We ended up with 26 men and 10 women with 3 people to each of the dozen Hummers. That left 2 Hummers staffed only with men, but when they ran into a problem with a woman, they backed off and got on the SINCGARS and called in a Hummer with a woman aboard. Then a couple of Marshals got wounded in shootouts and we replaced the men with women so there was a female Marshal in every Hummer. That worked better.

It took 6 weeks, not 4, for the Army to restore the phones and the power. For the next few weeks, we made continual patrols to support the locals. Over in Las Cruces, Gary got into it with a couple of lowlifes that were helping themselves to the contents of a semi parked at the SW Wal-Mart store late one night. He slipped out of the Hummer and approached them and then turned on his lantern. They froze and then one of them made an awkward move. Swish-click-bang-click-bang and the problem was solved all in the span of about 3 seconds. Gary just left them lay as a warning to others. It was 8 weeks until we could get free to go to Washington and I called to let them know to pick us up.

Two days later on June 3, 2013, a VC-20 landed at Roswell airport and transported Ritchie, The Three Amigos and myself to Andrews AFB where Giuliani met us.

“What’s the situation in New Mexico?” Giuliani asked.

“Stable,” I said. “Parker’s ok and back on the bench.”

“I heard,” the President replied. “Did he hang any more looters?”

“Never got the chance,” Gary piped up, “We shot them.”

“The reason I brought you guys to Washington is that we have a problem,” the President announced.

“Can’t get enough flu vaccine?” I suggested.

“We’re fine on the vaccine,” he said. “And with the power back on, we’ve gone a long way to restoring law and order. We have some industry up and running and the Secretary of Agriculture tells me that they’ve planted the largest crop in years. The long-range weather forecast looks good so by fall we’ll be pretty squared away on food. By the way, the latest population estimates for the US put the population around 97 million.”

“Then what’s the problem?” I asked. “Sounds like everything is fine to me.”

“You know how that lava dome has been building at Mt. St. Helens since 2004?” he asked.

“We’re not geologists,” I pointed out.

“I’ve got geologists running out the ears, he said, “That’s my problem.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“There have been several earthquake swarms recently at Mt. St. Helens and the USGS sent in a large team of geologists to monitor the event and warn of a possible eruption,” he continued. “Anyway 3 days ago, a group of eco-terrorists took them hostage. The

seismometers seem to indicate that an eruption is imminent and I have almost 50 geologists and 30 terrorists trapped on that mountain. What I need from you fellas to affect a rescue.”

“What do you want us to do?” I asked.

“We’ll fly you and the team you took to Iran to Portland and chopper you in to the base of the mountain,” the President explained. “The hostages and eco-terrorists are on the north rim where the volcano blew out in ‘80. After that, it’s up to you.”

“Did you have a fee in mind?” I asked.

“I’ll give you \$25 million a head for the terrorists dead or alive, providing you can rescue the hostages,” Giuliani replied.

“Time frame?” I asked.

“We’ll fly you back to Roswell to pick up your gear and your people and then transport you to Portland immediately,” Rudi replied.

“Isn’t that a job more for the FBI’s HRT or Delta Force or someone?” Gary asked.

“You’re Olsen, right?” the President said.

“Yep,” Gary replied poker faced.

“They’re not available,” the President replied.

“We’ll provide our own transportation, Mr. President,” Gary said, an edge in his voice.

I have no idea why but I looked at Gary, a little surprised, and then at Ron. Ron saw me looking and gave an almost imperceptible negative shake of his head.

“That’s right, Mr. President,” I said, “We provide our own transportation.”

“Your aircraft is refueled, so you can return to Roswell immediately,” the President informed us.

We boarded the plane and when we were airborne I asked what in the hell was going on.

“Tango Romeo Alpha Papa,” Gary whispered.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 33 – Double Reverse

It took everyone a moment or two to realize that Gary had said, “T-R-A-P.” We didn’t say another word all the way to Roswell. I figured Gary was crazy but that I’d better hear him out. And, if he WAS right, then we’d be better off not talking until we got home. It was their aircraft, not ours.

After we landed and the VC-20 took off, I asked Gary just what in the hell he was talking about.

“Did you call him and tell him we were ready to come or did he call you and tell you that he needed us and would pick us up?” Gary asked.

“I called him,” I replied.

“When did you call them?” he asked.

June 1st,” I replied.

“And the eco-terrorists took those people hostage on May 31st, right?” he asked.

“That sounds about right,” Ritchie said.

“And it was so urgent that they waited until June 3rd to pick us up,” Gary said. “Then instead of working out an agreement on the phone, he flies us to Washington for a face-to-face meeting where we sit around and chitchat about vaccines and crops and weather and the national population estimates. And those hostages just lost 8 or 10 hours, minimum. The HRT is called the Hostage Rescue Team for a reason. And Delta Force is trained to handle hostage rescues. Even if they were busy, there are the SEALs, the Green Berets, Force Recon and the Rangers. But, Mr. President Giuliani couldn’t do it without us? BS.”

“You’re making good points but what’s the issue?” Ritchie asked.

“He said, ‘we’ll fly you and the team you took to Iran to Portland’,” Gary replied. “What difference does it make who goes as long as we get the job done?”

* * *

Gary did have a point. And it should have been obvious to me because who would send a bunch of old men to climb a mountain to rescue hostages? I was the youngest at 63, except for Ritchie and some of the staff, but it didn’t make much sense.

“Any ideas?” I asked.

“It’s a dang shame about Marine-One,” Gary said.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“They are vulnerable to Bee parts,” Gary smiled.

We provided our own transportation all right. All of the ways back to Baltimore on a chartered Gulfstream. We didn't have a lot of baggage, just what we needed including 2 Bee parts. We picked up the 2 Suburban's at the airport with Travis and the 3 cousins in one and The Three Amigos and me in the other. Giuliani had mentioned that he was going to spend the weekend at Camp David, MD. We had gone to DC on Monday, June 3rd and returned home during the early hours of Tuesday, June 4th. Ritchie had checked the USGS website in Pasadena and there weren't any earthquake 'swarms' being reported at Mt. St. Helens in excess of the normal 5-10 small quakes a day. He chartered the Gulfstream V and we headed to Baltimore, arriving late on the evening of Wednesday June 5th. We spent the night in a motel after picking up the black Suburban's and then had headed to Camp David. The roads to Camp David were very familiar. Ritchie had paid dearly to have black Suburban's just like the Secret Service used. He had paid even more dearly for the Gulfstream and a pilot who was deaf, dumb and blind when he wasn't looking out the windshield of the aircraft.

I was guessing that they had slightly altered the flight route for Marine-One after we'd shot down Condi. I was also guessing that they wouldn't use the same route in and out. On the other hand, they really couldn't deviate much from the flight pattern they'd used before, so I went looking for my hidey-hole I used the last time. The hole was there but the netting was gone. I expected that and had a new piece of netting to cover over the hole again. This would be the last time I could use this hole, no matter how many Presidents I ended up killing. Ever heard the expression, “Third on a match?” Maybe it was an urban legend, I never knew for sure. But, the story was that German snipers during WW I waited for the flare of a match. It took them long enough to align their sights that if you were foolish enough to be the third man to light your cigarette from that match, you got killed.

I didn't believe that they'd think that someone would shoot from the virtually same spot. I assumed instead, as I said, that they would vary their flight pattern instead. But this hidey-hole was perfect and I decided to use it again. Late Friday afternoon Marine-One brought Rudi to Camp David on a different flight path that Condi had used. I'd just have to wait until Sunday to see if I was right. It didn't matter if I was wrong, either, because Travis was now trained to use the Stinger and I put him about two miles away from me to the south. The chopper had come in on a path to the north. The Three Amigos and the 3 cousins were spread out over the area with radios to give Travis and me a heads up when the helicopter left. Around eleven in the morning on Sunday, we finally got the call.

Marine-One would pass about halfway between Travis and me, need I say more? Sure I will. Whump-Whump-Whump, the bird passed overhead. I got 'tone' and fired and could see Travis's rocket streaking skyward along with mine. We didn't stick around to see

what happened next, it was most certainly time to bug out. We heard the explosions as the two rockets hit the President's bird, followed by a secondary explosion, apparently the fuel tank exploding. We were in the Suburbans and moving down the road before anyone had time to react. Those flashing lights we'd installed behind the grilles must have done the trick. We returned to Baltimore and got a motel and late that night removed the lights and sirens. They and the launcher assemblies ended up back in the missile cases and we were at the airport at 0800 Monday morning boarding the chartered jet.

I guess you could say that old Rudi wouldn't have to worry about anyone tying the bombing in Tehran back to him anymore. Or if they did, he just wouldn't care. Assuming Rudi did have people waiting at Mt. St. Helens to kill us when we showed up to take out the eco-terrorists, what would they do when we failed to show up? That's why I put Ritchie on a plane to Portland, because of the caller ID. On Thursday evening, he called Rudi and told him we were in Portland and were having helicopter problems and it might be Tuesday before we could handle the assault. Ritchie even offered to cut \$2.5 million a head off the price. Nice touch. Which was only a temporary measure, because whoever was waiting on the mountain knew who we were and were expecting us Tuesday morning. So we kept the appointment on Mt. St. Helens on Monday evening.

Ritchie was waiting for us when we got to the Red Rock Pass a little after dark. We slowly circled the mountain on the east side and came in above them. Just below, almost in the crater was where they fell and we left the bodies. This whole deal had to be pretty hush-hush from Rudi's point of view and I concluded that he probably hadn't used any middlemen to set up the ambush; at least not anyone who would ever talk, especially considering how he and his sniper team died.

We had to rest a while because we were all pretty tired, especially those 3 old men. But, it was downhill all the way to the Johnston Ridge Observatory. From there, we got in the pickup that Ritchie had left and moved to Red Rock Pass to pick up the other truck. Then, we returned to Portland, dropped off the rental trucks and took a cab to the airport where we boarded that charter jet one more time and returned to Roswell. I just hoped that Rudi hadn't given our name to the VP and told him that if he ever had a problem...

o

"Yes Mr. President?" I answered the phone. "Really, he did? And you want what? Send a VC-20 to Roswell to pick us up and we'll meet you in, say, Denver? At the airport? Yes sir, I believe we can handle the problem, but we shouldn't talk about it on the phone. Thank you sir. Yes sir, I've got it somewhere. No sir, we haven't done that type of work in years, we're all US Marshal's now. Yes sir, about 5 hours."

"Stacy, have you seen my Paladin Suit?" I asked.

"It's in the hall closet, but can you still fit into it?" she asked.

“Do I have a black shirt and trousers?” I asked.

“No, but you can run into Roswell and pick up new ones,” she replied.

“Yeah, this is Paladin,” I told Ron. “We have a new contract and you boys get out the hardware and dress up real pretty. I’ll have Ritchie pick you fellas up in about 4 hours. Wear the nickel-plated guns and bring your Winchesters. I’ll give you what information I have when I see you.”

I found a nice pair of black trousers and a western cut black shirt in town that looked almost like my Paladin Suit. It wasn’t the pants and shirt that distinguished the outfit anyway; it was the holster and gun. When I got home, I strapped on my rig and slid the derringer up under the belt buckle. I told Ritchie to get dressed up nice because we were going to see the new President. He asked what about and I told him to commit suicide. I cleaned and oiled my blued Colt .45 S&W and I was good to go. Ritchie showed up all dressed up in a western cut suit and I sat him down and explained what was going on.

“Ritchie, the new President got our name from the late President Giuliani,” I explained. “It seems that Giuliani was behind that bombing in Tehran and then recently he tried to cover his tracks by killing the hit team he used in Iran.”

“You don’t say,” Ritchie chuckled.

“Anyway the new President has no idea who was involved, but he wants us to find them and kill them,” I continued.

“I suppose he wants to see the bodies?” Ritchie asked.

“Nope he said he’d settle for pictures,” I laughed.

“How much for the job, boss,” Ritchie asked.

“He didn’t say,” I explained, “So I guess it’s negotiable. But if all of this travel keeps up, we’re going to have to buy our own Gulfstream VI.”

Two hours later we picked up The Three Amigos and headed to the airport. They were all dressed up in those fancy western suits I’d bought them in New York City for the UN deal; all except Gary who had lost too much weight. Gary was wearing black pants and a black shirt just like I was. His hat was black, but a different style than mine and he had the nickel-plated gun in that Laredoan cross draw rig. He picked lint off that hat all the way to Denver while I explained to them what the job was. Ron was laughing so hard he was crying before we got halfway to Denver.

“Mr. President,” I said, “It’s good to meet you.”

“This is the rest of your gang?” the former VP asked. “What do you call yourselves, the ‘Over The Hill Gang’?”

“Say, wasn’t that the name of that Disney movie?” Clarence asked.

“Mr. President, we’re mostly retired, as I told you on the phone,” I replied evenly. “We’re all US Marshal’s or Deputy Marshal’s and I think you’ll find that we can handle any problem you present us with.”

“You’re Paladin, right?” he asked. “Who’s this other guy, your father?”

“Let’s go fellas,” I said, “We can get insulted at home.”

“Hey lighten up Paladin,” the President said. “All right, here’s the deal. President Giuliani was behind the bombing in Tehran. He hired 10 men to do the job and recently when he got to thinking about how history would remember him, he arranged to have them eliminated. Somehow, they figured out what he was doing and turned the tables on him. Our best guess is that those ten men shot down Marine-One killing Giuliani and then headed to Mt. St. Helens to take out the hit team Giuliani had waiting for them.”

“Mr. President, it sounds to me like you’re talking about a powerful organization,” I said. “I might have an idea who they are, but to take them on and kill them would be tantamount to suicide.”

“I’m willing to pay to get this job done,” he replied. “What would it take?”

“Are you familiar with how much Giuliani is rumored to have paid for the Tehran job?” I asked.

“I have no idea,” he responded.

“Well, rumor on the street was that he paid \$25 million in expenses up front plus provided the weapons and all of the transportation,” I explained. “The same rumor mill said that he paid \$1,800 million for the 72 officials killed and the hit team got to keep their guns and expense money.”

“That was pretty steep,” he blinked.

“It was only rumor, Mr. President,” I said. “Anyway, it will give you some idea how expensive these things can be. Now, anyone that can earn that kind of money for a single hit is very dangerous and very risky to take on. Did you say there were 10 of them?”

“That’s right, 10,” he replied.

“\$100 million a head, plus \$25 million expenses and that’s our only offer,” I announced.

“That’s one billion dollars with a ‘B’,” he choked.

“And worth every penny of the risk,” I replied.

“But I don’t know how, I mean where, I could get that kind of money,” he sputtered.

“Giuliani found it and so can you,” I said. “Ready to go boys?”

“Ok, ok, it’s a deal,” he said, “How do you want it handled.”

“You wire \$25 million to our corporate account,” I said, “And we do the deal. When it’s over, we’ll deliver the pictures of the bodies and you give us the billion dollars. And if you renege on the deal, the Washington Post and the New York Times get copies of the photos, together with an explanation.”

“I agree,” he said very reluctantly.

“We’ll call you and leave a message,” I said. “When you get the message, you meet us in this room at 8pm the following evening. By the way Mr. President, you saw what happened to Giuliani when he double-crossed his hit men, right? It’s sort of a personal code among men in our profession.”

We got on the plane and flew back to Roswell. We were laughing too hard to really discuss the details about how we were going to pull this off. Ron said it best when he suggested that when you got in the cage with a snake you should expect to get bitten. I told Ritchie to get his butt up to Albuquerque and get 10 male cadavers, get them smeared with blood, posed and take the pictures. Maybe some guys in their late 40’s, I suggested. While he was gone making our money for us, I ordered a new Gulfstream VI with the latest laser missile defense system. I used the leftover expense money to put in a tank at the Roswell airport and have it filled with JP5.

Have Gun Will Travel – Chapter 34 – Traveling First Class

The new Gulfstream VI had upgraded Rolls Royce engines that increased the range from 6,750 miles to 7,250 miles. Maximum speed was also increased to mach .925. Northstar and EVS were standard. For a fee, the plane could include the new Matador laser missile defense system adapted from the Gulfstream IV. The cabin capacity was the same as the G550, in our case 14. In fact, the plane was not much more than a G550 with different engines and the Matador system. The total cost of the plane, with the defensive system was \$40 million. Not bad considering how much better it was than the Gulfstream V (G500 & G550) that went for \$36 million without the missile defense system and the shorter range and slower speed.

After an appropriate wait, I called the White House and asked them to give the President the message that Paladin called. The next evening, we were waiting in Denver when the President arrived. I handed him the pictures and told him not to bother looking for the bodies because we'd disposed of them to avoid leaving a trail that could lead back to the White House. Actually, Ritchie and the Indians had washed off the blood and returned them to the morgue in Albuquerque. It was amazing what you could rent for \$5,000. The President burned the pictures and handed me a US Treasury check for \$1 billion payable to the security corporation. I handed the check back to him and pulled out a duplicate set of pictures. I told him it would have to be cash or a check made out to cash.

Twenty-four hours later a VC-20 landed at Roswell and delivered a check made out to cash. I gave the pilot a sealed envelope containing the duplicate set of pictures I'd shown the President (each of us kept a set as a souvenir). I deducted the \$20 million remaining to be paid on the plane and deposited \$196 million in each of our special bank accounts. The cost of maintaining and operating the aircraft, estimated at about \$1,750 per hour, would be a corporate expense. I stopped by The Three Amigos tract and gave them their deposit slips, and then returned to our command center and gave Ritchie his. We wrote the \$5,000 we gave the guy in Albuquerque off as a business expense. Not bad for 2 airplane trips and a little white lie. I presumed that this was the end of our business with the President and we were finally retired once and for all.

And we were for about a year. In one way, we were like federal judges; our jobs were lifetime appointments. We still got the Marshal checks, \$110,000 per for me and \$100,000 per for Ritchie and the fellas. We still made the occasional trip around the state to make sure everything was working smoothly and, maybe get in a little fishing. The problem with working with guys like these politicians who end up being President is that it took an insatiable appetite to get the office and that appetite didn't go away once they got the job. Besides, the new President owed somebody for his job, but he thought he'd had him/them killed. One of the nice things about everyone being Marshals was that I didn't have to pay Travis or the cousins. A man and his family can live pretty well on \$100,000 per year when all he has to buy is clothing, groceries and pay some utilities.

Actually all of us could. The cost of living in Roswell wasn't too high and the money we were making on our money was accumulating. I had suggested to the fellas that they could do a lot better with an offshore account someplace like in the Cayman Islands and they'd done that shortly after depositing the \$187 million checks in their special bank accounts. They kept the special accounts for their 'operating expenses' and transferred money between the Cayman account and Wells Fargo as needed. Like when Gary had given his kids the \$100 million I mentioned earlier. He'd made just shy of \$28,000 in interest from Wells Fargo for the single day the money had been in his account until he bought the gold. (.06/365 times \$100 million) He probably spent it on those teachers.

The last time I'd mentioned our money was when we were in the cash stage. We were past that and the money was down in the Cayman Islands with the fellas'. I gave Ritchie the go ahead to upgrade the silo by adding a T-3 line. I also asked Stacy what the \$197 million did to our accumulated savings. She said that after you got to a certain point the amount of money you had became meaningless because you only needed so much to live on. And, that amount turned out to be the money I earned as a Marshal. The corporation covered our expenses, other than the living expenses. Then the contract on the OC-12 came up for renewal and Ritchie sold his customers to Earthlink and shut down that line and moved the equipment to my new silo.

With that new plane, we could all jump in and have the pilots take us anywhere we wanted. No more hassle with airlines or charter companies. Gary finally settled down with a new live-in. Someone more appropriate to his age like a 30-year old former centerfold. He used the corporate lawyer to do the 'pre-nuptial/anti-palimony' agreement. He told me he wasn't getting married again, but why hire the lawyer twice? I got the impression that he didn't much care for lawyers. Ron explained to me that Gary had a thing about lawyers, reporters and politicians when I asked. I figured that explained Geraldo, who died in the epidemic.

As I said earlier, I figured that we were now fully retired and living off the lifetime income from being Marshals. I told Gary's son Derek to get some black clothes and I give him the Paladin rig so he could carry on the tradition. He was a young man, in relative terms, being only 37. Ritchie set up a website to help the young man out. It was a good thing that Derek was a Deputy US Marshal; he wasn't exactly getting a lot of business. Derek must have been one of those 'Indian Lovers' too because he put together a small crew consisting mostly of some 'cousins'.

Then in July 2014, the President called and said he had another job for us. I told him that we'd retired fully from the business and referred him to Derek. Told him that the boy was well trained and could handle most any little problem he needed to have 'resolved'. It wasn't an hour later that Derek came to my house.

"The President talk to you?" I asked.

“Yes sir, he did and that’s why I’m here,” Derek replied. “I’ve already talked to Dad about this and he said to talk to you. This new President must think he’s Richard Nixon. He has an enemy’s list and he wants all of the people giving him trouble to ‘go away’.”

“Are we talking about hitting them or what?” I wanted to know.

“He said he didn’t care what we did to get rid of them,” Derek explained. “We can openly eliminate them, make them disappear or publicly embarrass them.”

“How long is this enemy’s list of his?” I asked.

“He faxed it to me,” Derek said, “And there are 136 names.”

“136? That guy is crazier than I thought,” I got out spitting coffee all over my clean shirt.

“What should I do?” Derek asked, “He’s offering \$5 million a head. My Dad said that was too many people to take on and suggested that I talk to you.”

“Derek, get back to that lunatic and tell him you’re taking it under advisement and will have an answer for him in a couple of days.” I suggested.

“Yes sir,” he said and left.

Ron was right, when you get into a cage with a snake, you should expect to get bitten. \$5 million a head made the contract worth \$680 million, so it wasn’t something a person could just slough off. But 136 people dying, disappearing or being publicly embarrassed in a moderately short period of time could have far reaching consequences. I asked Ritchie to get The Three Amigos together so we could see if there was some way to turn this thing to our advantage.

“I called this meeting so we could discuss that offer the new President made to Derek,” I began. “Anyone have any idea how to turn this to our advantage?”

“I don’t have time to get involved,” Gary said, “I’m entertaining.”

“There’s no restriction on what happens to them, is that right?” Clarence asked.

“That’s right Clarence,” I agreed.

“And this is the guy who called us the ‘Over The Hill Gang’?” he continued.

“2 out of 2, Clarence,” I said, “You have something working in your head?”

“Sooner or later, this working relationship with this guy is going to backfire,” Clarence suggested. “So how about we help Derek do what he wants, in a way, and then when we have him positioned to take a fall, eliminate him, instead?”

“Ritchie, how many Stingers do we have left?” I asked.

“We have 4, but I heard on the news that they installed anti-missile systems on Marine-One,” Ritchie answered.

“Ritchie, on the north side of US 380, where the State Road 172 joins US 380, there are concrete structures that lead underground that were formerly Missile sites,” I said. “Only on the North side of the highway, not the south side, about 200 yards off the road. Check them out and see if we could fix one up as a temporary habitat.”

“Sure thing, boss,” he replied. “Do you have an idea?”

“I’m working on what Clarence said, fellas,” I explained. “What if we made all 136 people temporarily disappear?”

“What are you talking about Paladin?” Ron asked. “You thinking of kidnapping all of them and putting them up in an abandoned missile silo?”

“I like that,” Gary said. “It sure would be easy to guard them.”

It was just an idea at this point, but it did have certain attractions. Most people think in terms of keeping people out of a missile silo. But, what if we turned the tables and used it as a temporary prison of sorts? All it would take would be to clean the place up and stock it with food, water and beds. We could weld the escape tunnel shut and stuff them all in the command center. That would let Derek collect the \$5 million a head, plus expenses, and when he’d ‘filled’ the contract we could take out the President and turn them loose. It was something to think about anyway.

“Derek, I want you to take the contract at \$5 million a head plus expenses,” I suggested. “You aren’t going to kill them, you’re going to kidnap them and stuff them in a temporary prison. And, in the process, you’ll make very certain that they know who hired you.”

“And then what?” Derek asked. “Where is this silo, by the way?”

“The silos are over towards Caprock in this County,” I explained. “I’ve got Ritchie checking them out. After we have all of the people safely disappeared and you’ve collected the money, you can eliminate the President and then allow them to escape. They’ll be so busy raising a stink about the kidnapping by ‘minions of the President’ that we should slip through the cracks.”

“I wouldn’t want to kill any active duty military personnel,” Derek pointed out.

“You won’t, but I haven’t gotten that part figured out yet,” I told him.

The next day, Derek was back and he'd worked out the contract with the President. The President also had one more job that he wanted Derek to do. He wanted Derek to cap Ritchie, The Three Amigos and me. Man this President was dumb! He'd already paid us \$1 billion to kill ourselves and now he was offering \$500 million to Derek to tie up the loose ends. Obviously he had found the source of money that Giuliani had used to pay us. I asked Derek did the President want to see the bodies or would pictures do? Apparently that SOB didn't want to get his hands dirty, he'd settle for pictures.

Over the late summer of 2014, we got the old silo ready and moved all the excess bunks from silo number one to the temporary prison. Ritchie put the word out and located a Russian suitcase nuke or two and we set the plan in motion. In September, people started to disappear and Derek's bank account slowly grew. By Thanksgiving, he had all of those 136 people tucked away in that old silo and it was time for phase II. In this phase, Derek would 'kill' us and collect the \$500 million. We'd pulled the guard duty over at the old silo so the only faces the 136 people would recognize were ours and Derek and his crew was an unknown commodity.

We set Derek up with a video camera and a Mark II with an integral suppressor loaded with blanks. He shot videotape of the 'killings' of Ritchie, Gary, Ron, Clarence and me. The President gave him a check made out to cash and destroyed the copy of the videotape. It was now time for phase III, with modifications. Instead of letting the prisoners 'escape' Derek and his crew was going to rescue them. There would no doubt be rewards and awards and lots of media attention. It also gave us a chance to plant extra seeds about the nasty bum who called himself, 'President'. Phase III turned out to be a bitch. How do you get a suitcase nuke anywhere near the President? The Secret Service is a whole lot better than they show in the movies.

Remember the old saying that if you can't bring Mohamed to the mountain you bring the mountain to Mohamed? In this case, that suitcase nuke was Mohamed and the President was the mountain. Or, was it the other way around? This guy liked to ski and every winter he made several trips to Aspen, Colorado. Generally, they fly him into Denver and choppered him and his family over to Aspen. We'd discovered that during one segment of the journey, they passed very closely to one particular mountain. We put that Russian nuke on the mountain very close to where the chopper would pass by. Since Derek didn't want any part of killing any active duty military personnel, this deed fell to the original team. We looked pretty good for 5 old men who had been killed twice.

So, while we're detonating the stolen nuke, Derek and his crew are busy rescuing the 136 people from that silo. Come to think about it, I guess you could say that we brought the mountain to Mohamed, literally. We were flying above the scene in our Gulfstream VI and at the proper moment, the mountain became a million pieces of flying rock. The radio controlled detonator worked perfectly and Marine-One went down one more time.

In the aftermath, they ended up paying Derek and his crew a little over \$300 million in rewards for rescuing those 136 people from the silo. He and his Indians were all awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The tape of the President handing Derek the

check for killing the five of us, made by a buttonhole camera, was released as proof that the President had paid someone to kidnap the 136 people. You couldn't see who was with the President (Derek) and there was no audio, so the picture said whatever we wanted it to say. And a word here and a word there to certain reporters made certain that the video showed exactly what we wanted it to show.

In the aftermath, the publicity became too much to bear and Derek and his Indians bought an island in the Caribbean and constructed a new underground shelter. The Three Amigos, Ritchie and I joined them with our families. We sold off the shelters in New Mexico and made a decent profit. We paid for the url (the website) for 50 years and posted a note that said, "Gone Fishin'." But that's not the end of the story. It turned out that when the government began tracing the stolen Russian nuke, they ended up tracing it to a Saudi named bin Laden. I told you Ritchie was a genius with a computer, didn't I? I'll bet that I forgot to mention that Osama bin Laden had been killed by SEAL Team 6.

Authors Note: Paladin, The Three Amigos and Ritchie retired and turned in their badges. Derek had a runway constructed on his Caribbean island and was able to continue the business from there. Collectively, they had several billion dollars and wanted for nothing. Rumor has it that Gary died with a smile on his face. Derek didn't know it at the time, but he was better off on that island.

Have Gun Will Travel – Part II – Chapter 35 – Cowboy and the Indians

Derek wasn't a whole lot like his father, favoring his mother instead. Unlike his father, Derek was a steady churchgoer and when they'd bought the island and began to set everything up, he made a few changes to the way things were done. Instead of importing mobile homes or having homes constructed out of lumber, he found it more economical to build the homes out of concrete using the slip form construction method. One of the problems he had to deal with down in the Caribbean was the possibilities of a hurricane. And, there was the problem of the heat with them being so much closer to the equator. In the end, Derek had worked with an architect and they had built homes with walls a foot thick with Plexiglas bulletproof windows nearly 12" thick. Then, to protect the windows in the event of a hurricane, the architect had suggested those roll down shutters to protect the Plexiglas.

The church was constructed in a similar manner and it sat on the highest point on the island. The cross on top of the church was also made of Plexiglas and a powerful light was filtered into it, allowing it to be seen for miles. This living on an island wasn't without its complications. Absolutely everything had to be imported. And, depending upon the weather, importing things could be a problem. So, he had a 10-million gallon tank installed for diesel fuel for the generators and a 10-million gallon tank installed for JP5 for the corporate jet. He bought all new Hummers with all of the latest improvements for ground transportation.

Staff was hired to provide for their needs and it included a doctor/dentist, an anesthesiologist/nurse and 3 additional RNs. The minister was a non-denominational Christian minister, although Derek would have preferred a Baptist. There were also people hired to maintain the aircraft, the airport and the grounds. He added a concrete hangar at the airport to house the Gulfstream VI and made it oversized so it could house a couple of helicopters. And there were more buildings to construct, all using the identical construction technique. They needed a small clinic/hospital and a barn for their livestock, etc.

Between buying the island and building everything, Derek had managed to burn through every dime he'd earned on his first big contract. Not that it matter because they were set for years. The nice ocean breeze persuaded him to add wind turbines, further stretching the generating capacity. And, for when the wind didn't blow, he had solar panels on the roofs of all the buildings feeding a massive underground battery bank. They'd drilled a large diameter well and had ample fresh water. Most everything on the island ran on electricity since it was essentially free beyond the initial investment. And then his father had died and Derek had a little operating capital to the tune of \$500 million. His brother took his \$500 million, said adiós and moved back to the States with his kids.

The older generation slowly passed away to become a distant memory. Derek had spent a lot of time with his mentor, Paladin, and had learned the ins and outs of the trade. Paladin taught him many things, things that few Americans knew. For example, the Nizari sect of Islam became established when Hasan Ibn al-Sabbah refused to recognize al-Musta'li as the new caliph in 1094, instead supporting al-Musta'li's brother Ni-

zar, who disappeared under suspicious circumstances. This sect is actually very well known around the world, but under a different name: the Assassins.

The name “assassins” derives from the term for “takers of hashish,” a name given to them by their enemies. They became famous for their tactic of sending people on suicide missions to kill the commanders of armies, which threatened to overrun their strongholds. But, like many movements, the Nizaris mellowed with time and became less violent and more peaceful. Because they were persecuted in Iran, they began to move to the Indian subcontinent during the 14th century. Here they became to be known as Khoja (from the Persian word khwaja, meaning master).

The Nizaris gradually made many changes to their beliefs due to their Indian surroundings, and in the nineteenth century its popularity was fully revived after a long period of relative obscurity. Today it has a worldwide following, mostly consisting of businesspeople from the Indian subcontinent. The current Nizari Imam is the Aga Khan. Today there are about 20 million Khojas, with 2 million living in Pakistan. Those Nizari who accepted the caliphate of al-Mustali became known as the Mustalis, and they remained in Egypt until the fall of the Fatimid dynasty in 1171. From there the movement went to Yemen where they split again, with some remaining in Yemen and others moving to India. Those who went to India became known as Bohras.

In the second decade of the 21st Century, Mustalian Ismailis were mainly to be found in the Indian province of Gujarat, but there are also communities in Arabia, the Persian Gulf, East Africa, and Burma. All together, they number several hundred thousand.

Paladin had left Derek ownership of the corporation when he'd passed on. When Stacy died during the third decade of the 21st Century, she'd left their substantial funds to their daughters who were not surprisingly married to Ritchie and Norma's sons. Ritchie and Norma were still around but you almost had to get a pry bar to get either one of them to leave their yacht. The three boys turned out to be every bit as good as their parents when it came to making a computer work its magic. A link to the Internet was provided through satellite and with the advent of more modern technology, they had what amounted to an old OC-96 link, perhaps a bit more.

Robert David married Teresa Marie, Donald Harry married Mary Elizabeth and Paul Wayne married Ashley Suzanne. Derek's 3 children, Derek Spencer, Elizabeth Ann and Joshua James had grown up and the older two had married and brought their spouses, Kelley and David back to the island. Josh was in his final year of college at Harvard. DJ's wife, Kelley, was a schoolteacher and Elizabeth's husband David was an electrical engineer and commercially licensed pilot. As a matter of fact, he had worked briefly for Gulfstream and after he'd moved to the island, talked Derek into buying a new Gulfstream VII.

All of Paladin and Ritchie's kids had attended college and the boys had degrees in computer science and the girls in an assortment of disciplines. The world had begun to stabilize during the latter part of the second decade and there hadn't been a war of con-

sequence in years. The Swiss and the Russians became the two powers to reckon with in Europe and Asia. The United States had fallen on hard times and while still A superpower, wasn't THE superpower. That distinction had fallen to the Russians who now were the world's policeman. The Russians had quickly learned that being the world's policeman wasn't without its drawbacks and if they had a choice would have probably given the job back to the Americans.

And there were the Indians, three generations worth. Travis had helped Derek select a crew and these 'cousins' really were Travis's and the other 'cousins' cousins. As for Travis and the 3 'cousins' they had grown families who had been sent off to college and then been persuaded to stay on at the island. There was that in-between generation made up of Travis's and the 'cousins' real cousins and they were married with small children. It might be a good point to stop and recap because it might get complicated later on.

Of the older generation, there was Ritchie and Norma, Travis and the 'cousins' and their wives. Of the Middle generation there was Derek and Mary, Paladin and Stacy's daughters who were married to Ritchie and Norma's sons. The middle generation also included the Apache cousins and their families together with Travis and the 'cousins' children. The third generation included Derek and Mary's grandchildren, Travis and the 'cousins' grandchildren, or whatever. It gets so confusing.

There was a lot of 'old' money on that 28 square mile island down in the Caribbean. Nobody had to really work for a living but they worked to keep busy and maintain their skills. Twice a year a barge pulled in to the small port, or maybe it should be called the 'unloading' area and, resupplied the island. Derek had 'played the market' and had turned his inheritance into several times its original value. This was a good thing because no one wanted to hire the corporation for any of those assassination things. It was all very interesting, the money was used to earn their income and everyone pretty much did what they wanted on the island. Eventually they renamed the island and called the place Utopia. And with the passage of time, Utopia sought and was granted its independence and became a country of its own.

Utopia, in its most common and general meaning, refers to a hypothetical perfect society. It has also been used to describe actual communities founded in attempts to create such a society. The adjective utopian is often used to refer to good but (physically, socially, economically, or politically) impossible proposals, or at least ones that are very difficult to implement. The society wasn't perfect by any means, and the people occasionally had disputes to settle, but they managed. And that Plexiglas cross proclaimed to anyone who passed by that this was a Christian nation. The name Utopia was chosen, in this instance, because that was what the place was, not what it strived to be. And, the island and all things Derek owned became owned by the corporation when Derek had inherited the company and transferred title.

There are political utopias and religious utopias and economic utopias and any type of utopia one can name. Utopia was all of these and none of these. It was a small island in

the Caribbean owned by a corporation and inhabited by a group of friends with common goals and aspirations that chose to live there. By the way, the only outsiders who were welcome were those who married into one of the families on the island. Derek studied the lessons learned in such closed communities like Pitcairn Island and other closed societies and as a group they established rules for their country that either pleased everyone or didn't become a rule. There were a few company rules that were enforced, like the freedom of speech and the right to keep and bear arms, but generally Utopia had very few rules.

The island's sensors had indicated in the '20's that a problem was brewing and Derek had looked and found a pdf file on his father's old computer titled 'Abrupt Climate Change Scenario'. The climate change scenario outlined in the report was modeled on a century-long climate event that records from an ice core in Greenland indicated occurred 8,200 years before. Immediately following an extended period of warming, much like the phase the world had been in when the report was written, there was a sudden cooling. Average annual temperatures in Greenland dropped by roughly 5 degrees Fahrenheit, and temperature decreases nearly this large were likely to have occurred throughout the North Atlantic region. During the 8,200 year ago event severe winters in Europe and some other areas caused glaciers to advance, rivers to freeze, and agricultural lands to be less productive. Scientific evidence suggests that this event was associated with, and perhaps caused by, a collapse of the ocean's conveyor following a period of gradual warming.

The scenario concluded with, *It is quite plausible that within a decade the evidence of an imminent abrupt climate shift may become clear and reliable. It is also possible that our models will better enable us to predict the consequences. In that event the United States will need to take urgent action to prevent and mitigate some of the most significant impacts. Diplomatic action will be needed to minimize the likelihood of conflict in the most impacted areas, especially in the Caribbean and Asia. However, large population movements in this scenario are inevitable. Learning how to manage those populations, border tensions that arise and the resulting refugees will be critical. New forms of security agreements dealing specifically with energy, food and water will also be needed. In short, while the US itself will be relatively better off and with more adaptive capacity, it will find itself in a world where Europe will be struggling internally, large numbers of refugees washing up on its shores and Asia in serious crisis over food and water. Disruption and conflict will be endemic features of life.*

In 2036, the Gulfstream stopped flowing as had been predicted 45-50 years before. In 2036, Derek turned 59 years old. Utopia had spent the better part of 10 years getting ready for this very day. The population made certain that no necessary skill was unrepresented within the population and redundancy was built in. Those boys of the late Ritchie and Norma added zettabytes of modern storage and began to download just like their father had so many years before. A zettabyte was 1000 times an extabyte, which was 1000 times a petabyte, which was 1000 terabytes. Any knowledge that was online anywhere in the world was now stored on those powerful disc arrays.

There were other considerations according to that old scenario, more significant in their impact, like the military considerations. The scenario warned that there was great potential for tension in the Caribbean and Asia. There was a limit to how much they could do to defend the 28 square mile island. The cheapest alternative seemed to be Cruise missiles of various types. He bought some AGM-84 harpoons, some BGM-109 cruise missiles and some of those newer 'Affordable Missiles'. He added multiple Patriot PAC-3 anti-aircraft/anti-missile batteries. The only hard part had been getting the warheads for the cruise missiles. But, Ritchie came briefly out of retirement and somewhere secured 'several' of the TLAM-N (W80) and GLAM (W84) warheads.

When the United States came up missing several nuclear warheads of two different types, both intended for cruise missiles, there was some kind of stink in Washington. Ritchie and Norma were killed shortly thereafter in a boating accident and nobody knew Ritchie's secret for obtaining nuclear weapons. That was a secret that had died with him. All of those missiles put one hell of a dent in the accumulated income of the corporation, maybe like \$1 followed by the 'B' word, but hey, it was only money and they hadn't really earned it. Besides, they didn't have a Statue of Liberty or the Emma Lazarus poem saying, *Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!* The other countries could adopt the world, Utopia was by invitation only. And, if you didn't have your invitation by this time, you'd better stop looking in the mail.

In fact, Utopia issued a 'Statement of Non-Belligerency' to the nations of the world in 2035 when all of their preparations were complete. It was a wordy document that boiled down to 'we don't want what you have and won't give you what we have'. The document also implied that the small island nation had the ability to repel virtually any sort of invasion. Understand, they didn't come right out and say that they had nuclear weapons, but there was a tacit implication that they might have some in the 'all weapons at our disposal' statement. Plus, the whole world knew that the United States was missing several nuclear cruise missile warheads. And, unlike the Cubans in the 1960's the folks at Utopia didn't install all of those cruise missile launchers in the wide open for everyone's satellites to observe. Derek was as much a student of history as was his father.

Have Gun Will Travel – Part II – Chapter 36 – The Change in the Weather

The change in the weather didn't come on fast and in the beginning only a few scientists were aware that anything was wrong. The media screamed headlines declaring that this was *The Day After Tomorrow* but unlike the movie, where the earth turned to an ice cube in an hour, the change came slowly and most people became dismissive of the headlines and warnings. The people there on Utopia had satellite TV, about 500 channels worth, and could follow the slowly developing situation. The scientists' timetable was off by about 25 years in their old scenario, but they generally had it right. Ultimately it would fall to DJ and Joshua to protect the people of Utopia and when the Gulfstream stopped flowing, Derek began to intensify their lessons.

Derek had seen Korea and Kosovo, but his sons had seen none of this. Fortunately Gary had gotten into buying tapes from the History Channel and Discovery before he'd died. Derek had about 1,000 hours of viewing that he could use to educate his boys. DJ was born in 1993 and Joshua in 2003 and even the two of them had slightly different perspectives. However, some things never change and those two boys were into the shooting sports. Well why not? They were very good friends with Clarence's grandchildren and had an ongoing contest to see who could outshoot whom. Ron's son John had remained single and was in his advancing years. Brenda had finally remarried and had gotten a good one for a change. She had a passel of grandkids too. Kevin had somehow managed to get his hands on some coke that was pure and had died of a heart attack.

Utopia had the 9 principle bloodlines, Paladin, Ritchie, Gary, Ron, Clarence, Travis and each of the 'cousins'. Paladin and Ritchie had only been married once, but Gary had been married twice and had children by both women. Ron had been married 4 times and had children by his first 3 wives. John, Brenda and Kevin had been Linda's children from her first marriage. Then there were Clarence's kids and grandkids with several more bloodlines being introduced and the Apaches who weren't really cousins and represented several more bloodlines. I only mention this because one might presume that the population of the island was such that there might be genetic problems. Utopia was blessed to be free of bigotry and prejudice and if God could start a whole world with only 2 people, there was a good enough mix in Utopia that they could do the same.

They had started out with 2 Gulfstreams, a G600 and a G700, 2 Sikorsky helicopters, S-92's officially, but actually H-92 Superhawks, and 2 Bell 430's.

During 2004, the Israeli Navy had commissioned three Israeli-made Super Dvora Mk-III fast patrol ships. They were to replace the venerable Dabur patrol craft that have been in service for 30 years. The ship's main role was to protect the coast and intercept terrorists. But they also have a range of 750 nautical miles and could remain at sea for 96 hours without resupply.

The Super Dvora Mk-IIIs were manufactured by Israel Aircraft Industries' Ramta Division in Beersheba. The 27-meter-long craft boasted a top speed of 50 knots, making

them the fastest interdiction ships in the Israeli fleet. Ramta delivered three of the ships to the navy in July 2004. Altogether, the Israelis bought another eleven of the boats for a total of 14. According to an IAI statement, the vessel was armed with a remote-controlled Typhoon 25-mm cannon mounted on its hull and more weapons on its stern and bridge. After that, the Israelis began to market the boats and Derek had purchased 4. He commissioned them as North, South, East and West. The craft were powered by two Detroit Diesel MTU 12V-4000 series diesel engines driving two state-of-the-art model 16 Articulated Surface Drives (ASD) and were delivered with the Israeli Barak Ship Point Defense Missile System.

Being a separate country had certain advantages, obviously. And, you know how the US was always selling weapons systems to 'friendly' countries, right? What could more 'friendly' than a country made up of native-born Americans and native-born Native Americans and native-born Afro Americans? It didn't start out like that but after Derek bought the 4 patrol craft and several other weapons systems from the Israelis, the US defense contractors started lobbying Congress to sell weapons to Utopia. There were limitations imposed, like no nuclear weapons, etc. but who needed MORE American nuclear weapons?

Derek purchased 4 AH-64D Longbows to give Utopia some assault aircraft together with a few Hellfire missiles, a few AIM-9X Sidewinder missiles and a lot of the 70mm Hydra Folding Rockets and 30mm ammunition. The geography of the island didn't lend itself to the Americans or anyone else being able to land tanks. Much of the island was a high cliff with that small landing area where the barges landed and unloaded. Some Israeli antitank missiles that could even blow through reactive armor protected the landing area. Because of the well, Utopia didn't experience the problem that other Caribbean islands experienced with the growing seasons. But to tell the truth, it was a stretch to even consider Utopia to be part of the Caribbean.

The Island had a name before it was called Utopia, perhaps Ronde Island, but Derek wasn't sure. That could have been the name of the neighboring island, too. It was part of the Windward Islands and not that far from South America. Somehow he'd never gotten around to asking and nobody had said. He could always dig around in his papers if he really wanted to know; what was the point they called it Utopia now. When the Gulfstream stopped flowing in 2036, Utopia was fully prepared. His Dad would have been proud of him for that. Gary had been proud of both of his sons but he'd always shown a preference towards Derek, unreasonable as it had been. Gary hadn't gotten along with his Dad because they'd been too much alike and he hadn't, if the truth were known, gotten along with Damon for the same reason.

Just like the Prodigal son, when the Gulfstream stopped Damon returned to Utopia. Derek and Damon were fairly close and Derek was extremely happy to see Damon. Damon still had most of his money, not that it made a difference either way, and Derek was admittedly a little surprised. Damon's house had been kept exactly the way it had been when he'd left to return to the States and Derek had even had a lady clean it weekly, just in case. Derek had prayed frequently for his brother's safe return and obvi-

ously, God had heard him and answered his prayers. Mary was glad to see Damon, too but she was far happier that Derek had kept Damon's house clean. Britney, Aaron and Eric were also along with their spouses and some grandchildren. Eric was the youngest, born in 1995, making him about 41. Those spouses were nice people and Derek couldn't help the thought that they represented additional genetic diversity for the population of Utopia.

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The first trouble didn't come until the year 2040 and by this time DJ had taken over and was generally in charge of things. One of the patrol boats intercepted some folks from another island further up in the Caribbean and the folks were told to move on by the crew of the *West*. The people in the small boat were in fairly tough shape and they insisted on being allowed to proceed to Utopia. A couple of 25mm rounds across their bow got them to stop their boat but they weren't happy and they began brandishing weapons. The skipper of the *West* pulled alongside and asked them if he could be of assistance. Realizing that they were outgunned, the folks on the boat asked for food, water and fuel for their engine, all of which was promptly supplied. They moved on, much to the relief of the crew.

"You did what?" DJ asked, his voice rising.

"I gave them food, water and fuel Mr. Olsen," the skipper replied, "They were in a pretty bad way."

"Captain, you did the Christian thing and I suppose that I shouldn't be angry," DJ responded. "But dang it man, the next thing you know we'll have people from several islands or from Venezuela here looking for supplies."

"Relax, DJ, I'd have done the same," Derek intervened. "He's right Captain. I can see that it's beginning so from now on you are going to have to exercise much more caution. If it had been up to me, I'd have acquired 1,000 nuclear weapons and encircled the island at a range of about 12 miles. Unfortunately we have neighboring islands closer than that. I talked it over with my Dad before he died, and he advised me against it."

[Good move kid! Your daddy's ghost is right here keeping an eye on you. Ron and Clarence are over there and here comes Paladin. When you hear that inner voice warning you that you should or shouldn't do something, that'll be one of us.]

"Yes sir, Mr. Olsen," the skipper replied. "I'll pass that on to the other crews at the next briefing."

"No harm no foul, DJ, but you always need to consider the position the people find themselves in," Derek suggested. "Did you get those houses arranged for Damon's kids?"

"I took care of it and they'll be ready in a few days," DJ replied. "How did you know to preposition enough supplies to build them homes?"

"Your grandfather was a preparedness freak and he told me that he hoped Damon didn't leave," Derek explained. "But he said Damon and he were just alike and he'd bust out if he were Damon. He also told me not to be surprised if he ended up coming back here when TSHTF."

"Didn't Grandpa and Uncle Damon get along?" DJ asked.

"About like oil and water, DJ," Derek laughed.

"What's going to happen next, Dad?" DJ asked.

"If those scientists were right there are two possibilities, DJ," Derek replied. "Either it will get cooler and dryer as heat is siphoned off to the north or it will get warmer and more moist because the heat getting trapped by the greenhouse gases. I suspect the latter because the rainfall has been steadily increasing for the last 4 years. Remember, DJ, this is only the beginning. When it gets bad enough, the fighting over the limited resources will begin. You're running the show now, but if we can handle it, I'd load up on food. Have those whiz kids of Ritchie's do some modeling and try and anticipate things that might be in short supply if a war breaks out."

"How long do we have to get it done?" DJ asked.

"Do the food thing immediately and everything else within a year," Derek directed. "The projection has conflict breaking out in Europe as soon as year 5. Can we afford to install more tanks of JP5?"

"If we don't have to do it all at once, the income will cover it," DJ replied.

"Just get it done before year 10," Derek suggested. "Here; sit down and read this copy of the scenario I printed out. It will explain far better than I."

DJ took the paper and sat down that evening after dinner and went through it a couple of times. Their island was located about 12°15'N and 61°40'W. The time zone was GMT -4. If he was reading the report correctly, his Dad might be wrong on the weather. The warmth might be there for the next few years, but the unseasonable rain might let up and the island actually become dryer. Maybe he should have another deep 12" well drilled at the other end of the island. It would tap the subterranean aquifer at either a higher or lower level depending up which way the aquifer sloped and most aquifers had some slope associated with them. He also made a list of things he wanted to see Ritchie's sons program into their model. The thing that bothered him most was the discussion of the relationship between carrying capacity of the planet and warfare. And, if there were a war, what was the possibility of Utopia getting either sucked up into that war or experiencing the aftermath of the war?

You know about whiz kids, right? Before he had died in the boating accident Ritchie had worked with his sons and developed an elaborate model that would allow them to input single facts, based on real experience, and predict what the effects would be on them and on the major areas of the world. Bob, Don and Paul had further refined the model to allow for variances they could see based on the copy of the paper Derek had given them shortly after he found it on Gary's computer. Thus when DJ showed up the next day at the data center, they had the latest predictions. DJ got them started on the revised predictions of what might experience shortage and when the shortages might occur.

"Is that all you want? Don asked. "We do that automatically every time we change a parameter in the main model. At the moment, you should concentrate on long-term storage foodstuffs. We have a list of parts that might become scarce as the climate change becomes more pronounced in Europe."

"Is there any way that you guys could program the computer to automatically order the supplies as our needs change?"

"Paul turn the automatic order switch on and have the computer do a printout for DJ, and place orders for what we need, would you?" Don asked.

In that moment, DJ came to understand why Ritchie was so valuable to that old guy Paladin. The three brothers had his ear and took advantage of it. They showed DJ how based on the series of backdoors their father and mother had installed in most of the government systems accessible via the Internet, they would know before 'enemy' troops knew about any pending military action. Since Ritchie and Norma had minor differences in how they liked to crack someone's system the fellas were blessed by having more than one line of attack on everyone's computer. They had even programmed in a set of key words to screen for, that should they appear, would set off audible and visual alarms. Isn't technology wonderful?

Authors Note: The Three Amigos are dead, but someone forgot to tell their ghosts. How many of you can hear the voice of a lost loved one whispering in your mental 'ear'?

Have Gun Will Travel – Part II – Chapter 37 – Memories

*To the town of Agua Fria, rode a stranger one fine day.
Hardly spoke to folks around him, didn't have too much to say.
No one dared to ask his business, no one dared to make a slip.
For the stranger there amongst them, had a big iron...*

"Who is that singing, Dad?" DJ asked.

"Marty Robbins, DJ, you must have heard of him," Derek replied.

"Probably when I was a kid," DJ smiled. "Where did you find CD's? I didn't know that they'd made any of those in years."

"They did get replaced by the DVD's, didn't they?" Derek acknowledged. "Your grandfather and Sharon had about 600 of them."

"I never met her," DJ said.

"She died in the big influenza epidemic," Derek explained.

"What's that song about?" DJ asked.

"The last of the 48 states to join the Union was Arizona," Derek said. "Before they became a state back in 1912, their state law enforcement was a small group of Rangers. The song is a tribute to that group that Robbins recorded. The title is *Big Iron*."

"That's nice," DJ replied, totally unimpressed. "So who was that old guy Paladin?"

"I can't really say anybody knew his real name, DJ," Derek explained. "He was a Ranger who fought in Vietnam. Then he was a mercenary soldier and worked for the CIA. After that he became a professional assassin. Somewhere along the way, your grandpa ran into him and he ended up moving your grandpa and his friends to New Mexico to keep an eye on them. We had some adventures after that, I can tell you."

"I'm all ears," DJ grinned.

"That was a long time ago DJ and I think it's best to leave those stories buried," Derek replied ruefully. "You wouldn't want to know that you father might have been a stone cold killer for a while, would you?"

[Shut up, kid, don't burst his bubble.]

"I thought you were a Deputy US Marshal," DJ said.

“That too, DJ,” Derek reflected. “There came a time when we bought this island and just disappeared.”

“Where did you folks get the name for this island?” DJ asked.

“Utopia was a mythological perfect society,” Derek explained. “What we have here isn’t perfect, but it is about as close as you can come. When this island became an independent nation, we decided to rule it collectively as a group. That’s why we have so few rules. Other than some decency standards, and following the Ten Commandments, we don’t have any rules that everyone hasn’t agreed upon.”

“What about the rule that everyone carries a gun?” DJ asked.

“An armed society is a polite society, son,” Derek replied. “I made a few rules that applied to everyone on the island. It IS my island, after all.”

“I finished reading that paper about abrupt climate changes and Bob, Don and Paul are way ahead of me on everything,” DJ filled Derek in. “They activated an automatic order system to keep our supplies topped off and they have a computer model that their Dad helped them build. Every time something happens out there in the world, they can plug in the information and the model will make projections about what will happen next and even generate an order for additional supplies.”

“You just make sure you get the extra JP5,” Derek said. “And you want underground storage for that fuel, aboveground tanks are susceptible to attack. I want you to move the alert status for the island from green to blue.”

DJ didn’t know what the urgency was. From his reading of the scenario, they had maybe 6 years before trouble would come looking. But, moving from green to blue was a small step for the population of Utopia although it meant doubling the active patrol craft from one to two. He went to his office and called a contractor on the US mainland and ordered 2 tanks, not one. One was for JP5 and the other was for diesel fuel. He’d been a little conservative in his estimates to his father and could have both tanks installed and filled within a year of their construction being completed. And, since he was running things, he contacted the Israelis and ordered 4 more patrol boats. It was only money and they had lots of money.

Money was only paper anyway. Bob had a computer program that managed everyone’s investments and DJ figured that either Ritchie or Norma must have been involved in its design. People had started managing their investments with home computer programs back in the 1990’s and this program was light-years ahead. It was turning the investments at the optimal moments and was producing something like a 25-30% rate of return. Much of that return had been quietly invested in additional supplies and precious metals. You couldn’t eat silver, gold or platinum, but much of the world set store in their possession. Per capita, Utopia was the richest country in the world.

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A year later when the Israelis delivered the new patrol boats, DJ, increased the number of boats on patrol from 2 to 4. The contractor had finished the tanks and they were full. Utopia had 20 million gallons each of diesel fuel and JP5. They adjusted the basic assumptions about food and supplies and Utopia could go for 20 years on the food they had on hand, even allowing for a population explosion. Russia had joined the European Union far ahead of schedule, but the men who had written that paper hadn't known about the war between Europe and the United States. The biggest shortages seemed to be in energy and in food. Severe droughts had plagued most of the Northern Hemisphere.

During the past year, there had been several incidents involving groups of refugees attempting to land on Utopia. In most instances, they had been successfully turned away. But, there were always the diehard few who wouldn't take no for an answer and they were all visiting with Davy Jones. US defense contractors had become desperate for business and DJ took the opportunity to replace the 25mm canons on the patrol boats with the 30mm M230 automatic guns shooting M789 High Explosive Dual Purpose munitions. The 25mm Israeli guns had been relegated to defending the small loading area where the barges came in and the patrol boats were based.

From time to time those automatic monitors that they had on the computers around the world kicked up a fuss. There seemed to be a slow military buildup within the developed countries, like Russia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. To a lesser extent, Canada and México were building their Armies, but they had begun making overtures to the US to form a North American Alliance. And while those scientists had a good overall view of the climate changes back when they'd written their report, they'd really missed the boat when it came to predicting how and when some things would happen. It appeared to DJ that people were reacting much faster to the potential catastrophe.

"I thought you told me that it would take 5 years to put in the fuel," Derek confronted DJ.

"We have more money than I thought and since everything seems to be happening faster than predicted, it seemed like the thing to do," DJ defended his actions.

"You can start wearing this," Derek said handing DJ the Paladin gun rig. "I'm going to start wearing your grandfather's fast draw rig."

"Hey, these guns are heavy," DJ said, "They're nothing like my Glock."

"I have a bunch of DVD's I want you to watch, son," Derek said. "They're from a TV show that ran from 1957 to 1963 called *Have Gun Will Travel*. You need to understand the heritage behind those guns."

Right, like some old black and whites of a TV show that had aired about 80 years before were going to make a difference in 2041. But they did. Some of the lessons weren't particularly new. They were about honor and decency. Others were most revealing because they showed something about peoples' character that they didn't see much on Utopia. It was quite a shock.

Derek must have sensed that his time was drawing near. Damon had taken ill the year before and Derek wasn't looking all that spry. But, Derek was, after all in the spring of 2041, 67 years old. Well, DJ's great grandfather had lived to 78 on a bad heart and his grandfather had made it well into his 80's fighting diabetes all the way. DJ talked to the doctor and the doctor said that what the old guys needed was a little action to get their juices flowing.

"Dad, I'd like Uncle Damon to take over command of our small Navy and for you to take over command of our small militia," DJ suggested.

"Good, Damon can be the Fleet Admiral and I can be the General of the Army," Derek replied. "Say can you buy any tanks from the US Army?"

"They have some old Abrams M1A1's," DJ replied. "But they don't have any engines. We could probably almost buy them as scrap."

"Those original turbine engines were crap anyway," Derek said. "The M1A1 was the best of the Abrams tanks and the Honeywell LV100-5 engine that they developed for the Crusader was the best engine. They finally got their heads out of their butts and replaced the original turbines with the LV50-2's, but you can buy a half dozen of the scrap tanks and rebarrel them with L55s and replace the engines and they'll be good as new."

"What is a Fleet Admiral or a General of the Army?" DJ asked.

"That's a 5-star, my boy," Derek laughed, "I'll finally have one up on Patton."

"Who?" DJ asked.

"Never mind, son, he was before your time," Derek replied.

DJ managed to find some replica 5-star insignia on a website and ordered them for his father and uncle. The M1A1 Abrams fitted out with the a new L55 barrel, new engines and the latest canon rounds gave the 120mm canon a range beyond 8km and supplemented the patrol boats and their various missile systems. The tanks were selling for scrap prices, like DJ thought, and he found out that they were cheaper by the dozen because of the transportation costs. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, whatever that was, the US Army had developed a 'heavier' helmet for the troops in Iraq. Which was good or bad, depending upon your viewpoint.

Derek had DJ get him a nickel-plated Vaquero in a 5½” barrel because that was similar to what old George Patton had. Uncle Damon had been an ET in the Navy and he had a generally low opinion of the military, much to DJ’s chagrin. But Damon pinned on the stars anyway. Say did Chester Nimitz or Bull Halsey pace the deck of a patrol boat carrying a sawed off shotgun? But when you’re the highest-ranking member of the Navy, who is going to tell you otherwise?

Some things change a lot, like those zettabyte HDD arrays and some things never change, like the ability of a .45 caliber slug to knock a man off his feet. Derek had always maintained that the Army should have never adopted the Beretta M9 pistol. What good was uniformity if that uniformity got you killed? He favored the 10mm round, either the full-blown round or the .40S&W. He would have preferred the US Army adopt the Glock 20 with a 15-round magazine or in the alternative, the Glock 22 with a 17-round magazine.

The .40 was designed to EQUAL the LOW end of the 10’s accepted performance curve per the FBI test protocol in a higher capacity, shorter gun. The 40 was NOT designed to go anywhere higher in its performance envelope since it has a limiting factor, that being the small case. The accepted 10mm “Fed Lite” ammo was considered to be a good “starting point” and if need arose, the power could easily be goosed up. Since the 40 is in that “lite” ballpark, discussing its power is moot. It works. The 10’s design point was to extend the .45’s power, and range, with some additional benefit of increased capacity, and perhaps reliability, with a penalty as well of more perceived recoil with stout loads.

These items made the 40 the most accepted cartridge in recent history, and its popularity is growing daily. However the 10 is NOT a .40. It will outperform the .40 in most areas. One officer wrote me, and I quote:

We found that HOT 45’s and 10’s work well (as did the FBI) on various barriers. Even body armor hits are ‘distracting’ enough to allow a quick follow up to a non-protected area of the criminal’s body. Anyway, we sometimes train with steel knock down targets, and these calibers (.45 & 10) do have VERY impressive results with these. I have used these targets with new agents who think that smaller calibers have sufficient power to ‘knock down’ a man.

I personally have seen .40’s have big problems with pepper poppers’ setup on windy days, not so for 10’s, 45’s, and .357’s that go well into ‘Major’ territory. Relevant, perhaps not, you have to decide for yourself. Me, I carry a 10, and accept the SAME possibility of ‘over penetration’ and similar recoil of a .357.

The official sidearm of the Utopia militia was the Glock 20 with a 15-round magazine and backup handgun was the Glock 29. The official long arm of the Utopia militia was the Springfield Armory M1A with a newly improved 25-round magazine. The US military had problems with 30-round magazines but if you put an engineer on a problem for long enough, anything could be made to work and work well. The additional weight of the ex-

tra five rounds of 7.62×51mm ammo made the weapon a little heavier to carry. It was for this reason that the other official long arms of the Utopia militia were the HK-416s and HK-417s with complete barrel sets. People who could handle the extra weight, usually but not always men, were issued the M1A. The rest of the citizens were issued the Mini-14s, HK-416s or HK-417s. They used the HK AG-C/EGLM grenade launchers on both H&K rifles. M1A Super Match rifles and two different .50 caliber rifles were used for sniping. These included the Barrett M107 and the McMillan TAC-50.

Have Gun Will Travel – Part II – Chapter 38 – Confusing Times

To the town of Agua Fria, rode a stranger one fine day...

Without knowing it, DJ had inherited a personal quirk from his grandfather. Sometimes when he heard a song, it would periodically resurface and he would start humming what he'd heard. Thus it became with that Marty Robbins song, *Big Iron*. Eventually he got the CD from his Dad and burned a copy of the song onto a blank recordable CD that the 3 computer whizzes had dug up. Then, he got curious what the words Agua Fria meant and had to ask one of the Indians who spoke Spanish. Aqua Fria translates to the English as Cold Water. There was a Clearwater, a Sweetwater, a Chugwater, a Hot Water and Cold Water. Plus an Aqua Fria.

Orwell's idea of Utopia was *Democratic Socialism* which he described in 1984 as:

a society in which all men shall be equal...a society in which wealth, in the sense of personal possessions and luxuries, should be evenly distributed.... an earthly paradise in which men should live together in a state of brotherhood, without laws and without brute labour... where everyone worked short hours, had enough to eat, lived in a house with a bathroom and a refrigerator, and possessed a motor-car or even an airplane...

As early as the beginning of the 20th century, human equality had become technically possible ...there was no longer any real need for class distinctions or for large differences of wealth... With the development of machine production, the need for human drudgery, and therefore to a great extent for human inequality, had disappeared... It was no longer necessary for human beings to live at different social or economic levels... If the machines were used properly toward that end, hunger, overwork, dirt, illiteracy, and disease could be eliminated within a few generations.

An all-round increase in wealth meant the destruction of a hierarchical society... for if leisure and security were enjoyed by all alike, the great mass of human beings who are normally stupefied by poverty would become literate and would learn to think for themselves; and when once they had done this, they would sooner or later realize that the privileged minority had no function, and they would sweep it away. In the long run, a hierarchical society - with the High, the Middle and the Low - was only possible on a basis of poverty and ignorance.

Therefore the earthly paradise was discredited at exactly the moment when it became realized.

DJ regretted picking up the old book shortly after he'd started reading, but he couldn't seem to put it down. If this was utopia, what had his father meant by the remark, "It IS my island, after all?" Was his father claiming to be King, or something? But Utopia was supposed to be a classless society, wasn't it? Still no one pressed the issue about Derek owning the island and the corporation now owned the island. Then again, Derek was the only shareholder of the corporation, wasn't he?

Say wasn't the actual name of the Nazi party the National Socialist German Worker's Party? Well then, if that was the case, how does that square with their behavior in the 1930's and 1940's if you compare it to what Orwell said? The world described in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has striking and deliberate parallels to the Stalin's Soviet Union; notably, the themes of a betrayed revolution, which Orwell put so famously in *Animal Farm*, the subordination of individuals to 'the Party', and the extensive and institutional use of propaganda, especially as it influenced the main character of the book, Winston Smith. Hmm, Stalin sounds a lot like Hitler...

[Hey kid, stop thinking, you're going to get a headache.]

Blam... Blam... Blam... Blam...

"Frigin' wetbacks," Damon cursed while he reloaded his trusty shotgun.

"Mr. Olsen, they aren't wetbacks," the skipper tried to persuade him. "Those people are just refugees and we don't fire on them unless they fail to heed our instructions."

Blam... Blam... Blam... Blam...

"Screw 'em if they can't take a joke," Damon chuckled as he began stuff more '9-pellet' tactical buckshot shells into the Cruiser.

"But Mr. Olsen, they're over 100-yards away," the skipper said. "Do you want me to pull the boat closer so you can hit someone?"

"Naw, take us back to port skipper," Damon replied.

"I'm sorry, sir," the skipper said gingerly, "But we just started a 96-hour tour one-hour ago. We can't return to port for some time."

"You got more of the buckshot?" Damon asked.

"Yes sir, 4 cases, just like your nephew ordered," the skipper replied hopefully.

Damon was a bit, shall we say eccentric? He didn't want to hurt anyone but he wanted to feel that he was doing his duty to protect Utopia. Plus he wanted to set an example for the men and women he was leading that they shouldn't be afraid to engage in battle, if necessary. All he was actually accomplishing was to make them check the medical stores aboard the patrol boat to make certain that they were plenty of his meds.

[Family humor?]

“Mr. Olsen we can’t continually have your uncle shooting at all the refugees,” the skipper said.

“You took 4 cases of blanks, right?” DJ asked. “He isn’t really scaring anybody and as long as he thinks he’s accomplishing something, I’m in favor of letting him continue.”

“Sir, couldn’t we use a 5th boat with only a skeleton crew?” the skipper asked. “We could call it his flag ship and only staff it with volunteers.”

“Would anyone volunteer?” DJ asked.

“I’ll skipper the boat and I think I can get 3-4 more,” the skipper answered.

“Fine. Do it, skipper,” DJ smiled, “But just be sure you don’t have any 12-gauge shells on that boat other than the blanks.”

The Country of Venezuela had 6 light frigates (Lupo class), 2 coastal submarines (Sabalo class), 4 landing ships (Capana class), 6 relatively new (2008) large missile boats, 6 small patrol/missile boats (Constitucion class) plus 5 other assorted ships in its Navy. Venezuela had put up with the refugees from the Caribbean for an extensive period of time and finally in June of 2042 the frigates set sail for Utopia under the orders of the Asamblea Nacional and the President to halt the folks in Utopia from sending even more people to Venezuela. Oopsie.

The flight time on a cruise missile from Utopia to Caracas, Venezuela bordered on 45 minutes. The distance was about 600km and the missiles flew about 880kmph. The first response of the Utopians when the radar revealed the presence of the 6 frigates was to launch all 8 of the patrol boats and try to warn them off. The Captain of the Venezuelan flotilla had his orders and declined to be dissuaded by the small craft. Mistake number one. He put a shot across the bow of the *East*. Mistake number two. The patrol boats immediately launched a total of 12 Barak Ship Point Defense Missiles, two at each frigate. In response, the Captain ordered his frigates to open fire on the patrol boats. Mistake number three. The patrol boats were ducking and dodging and zigzagging to avoid being hit, all the time trying to maintain fire with the 30mm guns. Well, the Venezuelan Navy was so busy trying to avoid being sunk by the Barak missiles that the best they could manage was a minor hit on one patrol boat. Unfortunately that patrol boat was the ‘flagship’.

“They broke my boat,” Damon said.

“The damage isn’t that bad, sir, we can limp to port,” the skipper replied.

“This is the Admiral calling the General, Derek, are you there?” Damon radioed.

“What now Damon?” Derek inquired.

“They fired on us and broke my boat,” Damon replied.

“Who fired on you and do you require assistance?” Derek responded.

“The friggin’ Venezuelan Navy, that’s who and no, we can make it to port,” Damon explained.

“DJ, launch a TLAM-N on Caracas,” Derek instructed.

At 08:46 (local in Caracas) the country of Utopia joined the nuclear club when the 150kt W80 warhead exploded above Caracas. At Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado the Americans immediately realized what had happened to their missing W80 and W84 warheads. Considering the rather large number of warheads they were missing, minus one, they decided not to get involved in what they deemed to be a local affair. The United States had never fully recovered from WW III and sure wasn’t looking to get involved in WW IV. Besides the entire Northern Hemisphere seemed to be entering another ice age and they were too busy trying to move the 100 million or so citizens from the northern climes to below the Mason-Dixon Line.

Derek sent a message to the President of the United States. It said:

“Dear Mr. President:

“The Country of Utopia today repelled an invasion by forces of the Country of Venezuela and retaliated against that country. As you are no doubt now aware, Utopia possesses a substantial quantity of cruise missiles and a large quantity of W80 and W84 warheads.

“To paraphrase President John F. Kennedy, ‘It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched against this nation in the future as an attack by the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response against the United States.’”

“Sincerely,

“Derek Olsen, President
Country of Utopia
God Bless America”

Actually I think it was a combination of Kennedy’s words and the ‘God Bless America’ that got to the American President. Or, maybe it was that CIA report he’d gotten a few months ago that had finally figured out who was responsible for the deaths of Condoleezza Rice, Rudolph Gulliani and what’s his name. Besides, it had only been Caracas and the President could always head to Rio if it got too cold in Washington or Miami. He really would have preferred not to back down, but these boys went through President’s like crap through a goose. And, if they concentrate all of those warheads

below the Mason-Dixon Line, they could virtually wipe out the country. Good warheads too, some of the US's finest.

A nuclear weapon system consists of a delivery vehicle, a nuclear warhead, and those components (facilities, support equipment, procedures, and personnel) required for its operation. The surface launched Tomahawk Land Attack Missile-Nuclear (TLAM-N) weapon system on board a ship includes a BGM-109A-I cruise missile with a W80-0 nuclear warhead, deck mounted armored box launchers, a weapon control system, and a mission planning system. And, it hadn't taken THAT long to permanently bypass the PAL's on the warheads. Not when you had all of those highly trained nuclear engineers living in your country with their quality American educations.

Derek sure hoped his bluff against the American President worked. But, just in case, Utopia went on Orange Alert. There was no way that Utopia would ever attack the United States, after all, didn't the Utopians enjoy dual US and Utopian citizenship? He knew about that report the CIA had sent to the American President, Bob and the fellas had given him a copy even before the President of the United States had seen it. Now with any kind of luck, the United States would do what it had always done and declare the US allied with the newest nuclear power in the Western Hemisphere. And if not, the Utopians could always move to Rio right after they launched those 101 remaining cruise missiles.

Have Gun Will Travel – Part II – Chapter 39 – Nuclear Blackmail

That's what they call the situation that existed. Unfortunately the President of the United States couldn't threaten to bomb Russia back into the Stone Age like Kennedy had in 1962. The President was, in fact, helpless so he did what every sound thinking President would do if he found himself in a similar situation. He got on Air Force One and flew to Utopia to negotiate a truce. Of course about halfway between DC and Utopia, he got on the radio and personally assured Mr. Derek Olsen that his was a mission of peace. Good thing too, because they had the plane on their radar and were about to alert those Patriot batteries.

"So, Mr. President, I assume you finally seen the CIA report?" Derek asked.

"I have Mr. Olsen, it was most revealing," the President said. "Say have you read the memo?"

"What I can't understand is how they figured it out, CIA is an oxymoron, according to Tom Clancy," Derek suggested.

"Actually, what I believe the character in the movie said was, "Central Intelligence Agency... Now, there's a contradiction in terms," the President pointed out.

"I probably saw the memo about a week before you did," Derek chuckled.

"Was it accurate?" the President inquired.

"Mostly, yes," Derek said. "Although I didn't actually get involved until we killed what's his name. And I was totally opposed to shooting down Marine-One because of the air-crew. But my father and Paladin exploded that Russian suitcase nuke by remote control from our Gulfstream VI cruising at about 40,000' not from another mountain."

"I see," the President responded. "So, what do you need, Mr. Olsen, foreign aid? We do quite handsomely by the Israelis."

"We want the status quo," Derek replied, "Nothing more and nothing less. And Utopia declines to provide foreign aid to the United States. However, we would be willing to buy a couple of those B-2 Bombers if you can spare any."

"Sorry Mr. Olsen, but that would be tantamount to committing suicide," the President said. "Besides, according to our records, you folks stole about 75 of those warheads, meaning that you still have 74."

[Hmm, where have I heard that before? Yeah, huh, that's what Paladin told what's his name. And don't correct him, whatever you do. 74? Kid, you've got a pair of Aces in the hole.]

And, why didn't anyone ever tell the true story of the Cuban missile crisis? Russia was tired of having US Jupiter missiles in Turkey so it moved nuclear missiles in to Cuba to counter the perceived threat. JFK agreed to remove the missiles from Turkey in exchange for Russia removing the missiles from Cuba. What, they didn't teach that in your history class? Then I'll bet that they didn't teach you that on the day before the US stood down its Jupiter missiles in Turkey, a Polaris submarine surfaced off the coast of Turkey, the Captain of the submarine got in a raft and was transported to shore where he stood before the Commander of the Jupiter base and saluted the man and said something like, "Sir, you are relieved." JFK didn't give up anything, but Nikita got what he wanted. Sort of. In fact all that was accomplished was the changing of the guard from Jupiter missiles to Polaris missiles.

"The first SM-78 squadrons became fully operational in Italy and Turkey in June and November 1961, respectively. After a few months, control of the Jupiter squadrons was turned over to Italian/Turkish troops. In total, 30 missiles were deployed to Italy, and 15 to Turkey."

"The SM-78 did not stay in service very long. In January 1963 the USA announced to withdraw all Jupiter's from Italy and Turkey, and by July that year, the last missile had been removed. The US Navy's deployment of the UGM-27A Polaris SLBM (Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile) had made land-based IRBMs redundant. In June 1963, immediately prior to retirement, the SM-78 had been redesignated as PGM-19A."

You still trust the Presidents, right? Idiot! George W. Bush said there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, too. Didn't he? And FDR didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor until it happened.

Today, gunboat diplomacy seems like a phrase from some antiquated imperial past (despite our thirteen aircraft carrier strike groups that travel the world making "friendly" house calls from time to time). But if you stop thinking about literal gunboats and try to imagine how we carry out "armed diplomacy" – and, as we all know, under the Bush administration the Pentagon has taken over much that might once have been labeled "diplomacy" – then you can begin to conjure up our own twenty-first century version of gunboat diplomacy. But first, you have to consider exactly what the "platforms" are upon which we "export force," upon which we mount our "cannons."

As the Pentagon planned it, and as we knew via leaks to the press soon after the war, newly "liberated" Iraq, once "sovereignty" had been restored, was to have only a lightly armed military force of some 40,000 men and no air force. The other part of this equation, the given (if unspoken) part, was that some sort of significant long-term American military protection of the country would have to be put in place. That size Iraqi military in one of the most heavily armed regions of the planet was like an insurance policy that we would "have" to stay. And we've proceeded accordingly, emplacing our "little diplomats" right at a future hub of the global energy superhighway.

Gunboat Diplomacy has been likened to a screwdriver used to torque a particular screw, not a hammer used to drive home a point. As such it will continue to be an important term in the vocabulary of diplomacy during the 1990's. The challenges that face both political and military leaders are twofold. The first and most important is the optimum employment of naval forces when practicing gunboat diplomacy. The second is designing and maintaining a force structure to support the practice to the maximum degree possible while taking into account other competing missions. The concept is not obsolete, but does require refining in response to changes in both the diplomatic calculus and the technological environment.

The use of maritime power represented above fits the definition of Gunboat Diplomacy as defined by Sir James Cable in his thought provoking work, *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919-1979*. He provides the following definition:

“Gunboat Diplomacy is the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage, or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state.”

The United States of America began using Gunboat Diplomacy when President Thomas Jefferson sent American forces to deal with the Barbary Pirates. And will someone explain why the US needs 13 aircraft carriers? It may be hard to envision an aircraft carrier as a gunboat, but that's what it is, only bigger. So, Derek practiced a little gunboat diplomacy of his own. Except his 'gunboat' was a TLAM-N and a bluff to use it. Sauce for the goose, Mr. Saavik?

“As I said, we want the status quo,” Derek replied, “Nothing more and nothing less. And Utopia declines to provide foreign aid to the United States.”

“The United States is the richest nation on the earth, Mr. Olsen, what do you mean by that?” the President asked.

“Utopia has more gold than you have in Ft. Knox, Mr. President,” Derek smirked.

“But you are a totally dependent nation,” the President point out.

“Dependent upon whom, Mr. President?” Derek twisted the dagger. “We've done well buying from Israel.”

“And stealing from us,” the President reminded him.

“I would prefer to use the term borrow, Mr. President,” Derek's eyes twinkled. “We can return the warheads immediately, if that is your wish. They can be there in a little over an hour.”

“Well of course we want the missiles and warheads back... Did you say an hour?” the President asked befuddled.

“Everything ready to launch, DJ?” Derek asked.

“Yes sir, Dad, just give the word,” DJ responded right on cue.

“Why don’t you hang on to them in case some else attacks you?” the President suggested.

“Stand down, DJ,” Derek said.

“Yes sir,” DJ replied. DJ left the room before he burst out laughing. “Where?” he wondered, “Do they get these guys from?”

From that moment on the USA and Utopia became the best of allies and there was nothing that was too good for the ‘folks down by South America’. And this turned out to be a good thing for the United States. With a nuclear ally so close to South America the US was able to persuade the Argentineans and many others that the US was still their best market for beef and life’s little essentials. Never mind that it was 3,200 miles from the island nation to Buenos Aires and their Block II TLAM-A only had a range of 1,500 miles. You see, the term ‘long-range’ is relative and the Argentineans didn’t know what type of missile the Utopians had used. So, why take a chance?

The frosting on the cake was the amnesty granted by the President of the United States to all residents of Utopia for ‘all sins real or imagined’. Derek took advantage of the situation and sent Damon back to Atlanta to receive some much-needed treatment at Emory University Hospital. And, while the Utopians couldn’t keep everyone at bay, the United States became very secure in its southern border.

It seems that Utopia had two sides to its personality. The side you see, like the moon for example, and the side you don’t. Don’t they call that the Dark Side of the Moon? No, there aren’t any Pink Floyd fans here. I was referring to home, as in Roswell, NM. The phase “dark side of the Moon” usually refers to the side of the Moon that we cannot see from Earth. The Moon takes about 29 days to orbit the Earth. It takes almost the same amount of time to make one rotation on its axis. That is why we always see the same side of the Moon from Earth. This part of the Moon is not really the “dark side”, however, it is more accurately the “far side”. The side of the Moon we do not see from Earth gets just as much sunlight on it as the side we do see. In truth, the only dark side of the Moon is the side that is pointed away from the Sun at any given time.

Those scientists who wrote that proposal about abrupt climate changes got several things wrong; do you suppose that they just were alarmists? Or, did WW III do something to the climate that only made the Gulfstream stop and start right back up? Because in 2044, that’s exactly what it did. Everyone wanted a piece of Utopia after that. So Derek, being a practical man of 70 years, sold it and divided the money into 4 equal

shares. One for each of his children and one for him and Mary. Of course before they could return to the US, they had to turn all 74 of the cruise missiles and GLAM W84 and TLAM W80 warheads back over to the government of the United States. They didn't get to keep the Abrams and Apaches and but kept all of their other equipment. They didn't have any use for 8 patrol boats in the middle of America so they sold those to the new owners of the island.

You have been paying attention to the numbers, right? You'd better because the US government made certain that they got all 74 of their warheads back and they repurchased the 74 missiles that went with them. They certainly couldn't have a bunch of reformed killers out in the middle of New Mexico armed with cruise missiles and W80 warheads. Unfortunately when the corporation sold Utopia, it had a chilling effect on the society and just as Orwell had predicted, the society collapsed.

But there was a nucleus of friends who remained together. The nucleus included Ritchie and Norma's sons and their families, Derek Spencer Olsen, Jr. (DJ aka Paladin) and his family, Brenda's son and daughter-in-law and their family and Clarence's grandson, Clarence Rawlings III and his family. It wasn't quite perfect because the Olsen in the bunch wasn't named Gary and the Ronald in the bunch had a new last name (Black), but 1 out of 3 isn't bad. This was better than The Three Amigos and Paladin because 1) Paladin was one of The Three Amigos; and 2) they had 3 computer whizzes instead of one.

Derek and Mary returned to Iowa and who knows where Damon's kids ended up? There was a competency hearing and they ended up being their father's conservator so probably Atlanta. Elizabeth and her husband went back to his hometown of Laredo and Joshua and his wife settled in Des Moines, Iowa. DJ and his nucleus of friends pooled some of that money and bought a section or two of land over east of Lubbock, Texas. Why Lubbock, you might ask? Lubbock, Texas is 1431 miles (2303 km) (1244 nautical miles) from Washington, DC, as the crow flies. Which might work about perfect, depending upon what business they got into. And Derek gave his eldest son all of his father's weapons and Paladin's too.

Because of the energy crisis that related to the micro ice age that had started and stopped, the 20 million gallons of diesel fuel and the 20 million gallons of JP5 were worth their weight in gold, so to speak. It was cheaper to build new tanks and load the fuel aboard a tanker and haul it to the US than to sell it and try to replace it. A barrel of oil is 42 US gallons. The largest ship ever built held 4.1 million barrels of crude. That's 172.2 million gallons of oil. DJ sure didn't need that big of a tanker, he just needed something that held about 1 million barrels of finished product. One ship, one trip and they'd have enough fuel to last for the rest of their lives and into the afterlife.

There were those minor complications as in the government didn't want them having Abrams tanks or any Apache helicopters, so the government was forced to buy them back. They put the Israeli 25mm canons back on the boats before they sold them and ended up with 8 'surplus' M230's. I wonder what happened to them. They went in the

same containers that held all of their other toys. Like those Harpoon missiles and some Israeli antitank missiles that could even blow through reactive armor and the newer 'Affordable Missiles' and the multiple Patriot PAC-3 anti-aircraft/anti-missile batteries. It took a fair sized container ship and one medium sized tanker just to get all of the 'stuff' to Texas.

Have Gun Will Travel – Part II – Chapter 40 – Home on the Range

Old Ronald would have been in Heaven being back in Texas, he was a native, you know. Lived in Texas from Day 1 until he was 10 days old and then they moved to California. They were in Crosby County Texas and the exact location isn't important, I've said too much already. Shouldn't be hard to find the place, though, just look for that 10,000' airstrip out in the middle of nowhere. And, just to the east side of that airport, I expect, you'll find a mobile home park populated with a bunch of spanking new manufactured housing, the best that money can buy. Don't go looking for any missile silo however, because they picked some property that didn't have one.

DJ sort of fancied the shelter that his grandpa built in Las Vegas and built a new one according to the specs he could dig out of that story. They ended up with a nice little community there east of Lubbock. They had concrete hangars for their helicopters and Gulfstreams and underneath the gigantic hangar going down about 10 or 20 stories were their supplies. The population of Utopia had been right around 300, give or take. and they had enough food for 300 people for 20 years, remember? Or, enough food for one man for 6,000 years if you'd prefer. There were only The Three Amigos and the 3 computer geeks and the families, altogether, about 30 people.

What is a western survival story that only has cowboys but no Indians? The Apaches all moved to Arizona so DJ started looking around for some new Indian buddies. The problem was they couldn't find a whole lot of Indians in Texas. In 1986 the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation was the home to 510 people. The reservation land consisted of 4,766 acres, of which 3,071 was held in trust by the state of Texas and 1,280 was managed directly by the inhabitants. Income was generated through the operation of a tourist complex that includes a gift shop, restaurant, museums, campgrounds, and fishing facilities. The Tigua Indians, a pueblo tribe with historic claims to most of the land in the El Paso area, lost their homelands in the nineteenth century, when state and federal authorities took legal possession of the land. In 1968 the group gained formal recognition from both the federal and state government. Most of the tribe's ninety-seven-acre reservation is in the city limits of El Paso and Ysleta in El Paso County. Like the Alabama-Coushattas the Tiguas rely on tourism to generate revenues. Some residences are located on the reservation, but most of the Indians do not live there. In 1985 the Texas Band of Traditional Kickapoo received federal recognition as a distinct American Indian group. Along with the recognition came federal and state economic assistance to its members. The state designated 125.4 acres on the Rio Grande close to Eagle Pass as reservation lands. Most of this land is used by for residences and community institutions. Strike One.

Hat in hand, DJ got on the Gulfstream VI and had the pilots take him over to Arizona to see the former Utopian Apaches. The Apaches had a Presidential Pardon and a new Reservation and they didn't want to fight anyone or to do anything more than enjoy living on the new reservation. Strike Two. He returned to Lubbock very disappointed.

“Where are we going to find some Indians who are unhappy with the government?” DJ asked Bob.

“Did you try California?” Bob suggested. “The state succeeded in imposing a 25% tax on those tribes that own the casinos. The US Supreme Court finally ruled on the case and the Indians lost.”

“I’ll fly to California and talk to them,” DJ replied, sure he’d found the answer.

The tribes had appealed the Supreme Court ruling and asked for a rehearing on the case and weren’t interested. Strike Three? Hardly. It seems that there were several tribes in California that had been fighting the federal government for years for recognition. These people were angry with everyone and the frustration only made their anger worse. Costanoan Indian’s had been fussing ever since California had passed ‘An Act for the Government and Protection of Indians’ on April 22, 1850, 200 hundred years before. They referred to it as the Indian Slavery Act of 1850. And within the ranks of that group was a militancy that DJ took advantage of.

Raymond Littletree aka Ray Little was that man in charge and DJ asked him how he’d like to move to Texas and do a little ranching. DJ filled his head with tales about how his grandfather and some friends had succeeded in getting a new Reservation for the Apaches in Arizona during the time of the government unrest when Condi Rice and then Rudi Giuliani had been running things. The next thing you know, DJ had his Indians. There had been a little inflation in the intervening years and you couldn’t move a family for \$5,000 anymore. It came closer to \$25,000 a family, but it was only money and money wasn’t a problem. The banks in the Cayman Islands were in the best of form and rather than move all of their billions back to the States and risk getting taxed on them, they left their money, or most of it, down in the Caribbean.

As a country, the US had changed and those Democrats had been in power for quite a while. There was National Health Care and Social Security and even a Government Sales Tax to pay for it all. Between the federal sales tax and the state sales tax, the sales tax ran anywhere from 15% in the sticks to 22% in New York City. The Democrats had finally adopted the Canadian Plan when they got in bed with the Canadians and Mexicans to survive that micro ice age. The income tax rate had sort of slipped up too as the Democrats had tried to tax the wealthy.

How, you may ask, did they manage to get 27 Tomahawks with their W80 warheads and that other ordinance into the country? It was a question of timing more than anything else. Pouch: Also called air pouch or diplomatic pouch. Used as a noun to refer to the mailbag by which communications and other materials are conveyed to and from posts. Pouches enjoy diplomatic protection and thus are exempted from customs search. They may travel by air or by sea, depending on bulk. Pouches may be unclassified (moving on their own like mail) or classified (moving under the care of a US Department of State employee known as a Diplomatic Courier). The word can also be used as a verb, i.e., “to pouch.” Utopia put Diplomatic Pouch seals on all of those con-

tainers and lied about their contents. All of the materials were destined for the Utopian Embassy in Lubbock, Texas. Real nice of the US to provide guards.

When DJ had everything organized and safely tucked away, Derek sent a letter to the US Department of State and the President announcing the close of the Utopian society and the end of their diplomatic relations. Utopia was no more. To handle the sales tax issue, the Utopian Texans opened a mail-order survival supplies business. They had to do something with all of that food before it went bad. All of their subsequent purchases were for resale and thus exempt from tax. And, following the Korean example, they kept 2 sets of books, one that told the real story and another for those government auditors.

The unpleasant fact of American existence was that in 2048 the taxman was your Enemy; also the ATF because all guns were outlawed. And then there was FEMA because the US was still trying to get over that micro ice age. As the American Navy got old and rusty, it wasn't replaced. Then there was that 'Peace Dividend' that cut the active duty military to 5 Divisions. Mid-21st Century America was much like mid to late 20th Century Europe after the big one, only worse. Russia's merger with the EU had made the Eurasians the dominant force in the world. In a word or two, America had become a Socialist Democracy.

Back in the Lubbock, Texas area, that new spread over east of the city was prospering. They were selling their survival supplies at a tremendous rate because food was hard to come by and the surviving Americans had learned to be prepared. The 27 Tomahawks were encased in concrete bunkers completely encircling the 1,280 acres. Layer after layer of defenses backed up the Tomahawks; who says you can only use a Harpoon missile against a ship? And those illegal rifles and handguns were all safely tucked away in the armory, waiting for the day when they could be put to use again. It was a struggle, of that you can be sure. They had to rebuild the herd of Tennessee Walking horses and mules and get a herd of cattle going. Not a big herd, they only had 1,280 acres, but a herd of cattle and hogs and a flock of chickens.

They called the ranch Utopia, by the way. It was a little slice of American history all tucked away there east of Lubbock, Texas. They replaced their aging fleet of aircraft with the latest models, Gulfstream IX's (G950) and the latest generation of Sikorsky and Bell helicopters. The shooting range had to be indoors because you couldn't have any pesky neighbors hearing gunshots and calling the law. The latest generation of the Hummer would run on about anything and a turbine engine powered it. And, for a nominal fee, one could get the armored version, a factory option. So they did to the tune of 2 per family, or more.

"The reason we left California and joined up with you folks was to get recognition for our tribe," Ray told DJ. "We've been here for about 2 years and all we've been doing is ranching. When are you going to keep your promise?"

"I suppose we could start this year," DJ replied, "We have everything adjusted and we're good to go."

“What do you mean by adjusted?” Ray asked.

“We had to unload that old food and replace it, Ray,” DJ responded. “Plus we had to service all of our military equipment. It was getting old and exceeding its shelf life, so to speak. All of that is accomplished so we can get out there and stir the soup. Where would you like to begin?”

“We tried every legal remedy in existence,” Ray said, “How about a military option?”

“Right, Ray, we’ll declare war on the United States,” DJ smirked.

“In a manner of speaking, why the hell not?” Ray came back with fire in his eyes. “The American Army has been reduced to nothing but a bunch of supply clerks keeping track of their inventory of obsolete arms and ordnance. And, they sure in the hell couldn’t use the Navy, if they had one, in the middle of northern Texas.”

Lubbock, Texas is just below the panhandle, nearly straight south of Amarillo and about straight west of Dallas-Ft. Worth or maybe a little north. It was Comanche and Kiowa country, to be exact. And we all know what a bunch of ‘Indian Lovers’ the Olsen family had always been. It was an unlikely alliance, the Kiowa and Comanches and the Costanoan Indians, but DJ made it work because they all had a common enemy, the government of the United States. And, between you and me, my grandson didn’t much care for what the country had become. He was rapidly becoming re-Americanized, what with cheating on his taxes and all.

Word got around among members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) especially up north where there was still a lot of snow and some of the Sioux jumped in their pickups with their .30-30 rifles and headed for Texas. There was talk about stealing the country back from the white men who had stolen it from them. The only Kiowa’s and Comanche’s who had joined up were some of a vocal minority. However, each of the 4 tribes represented had an axe to grind, whether it be lack of recognition or any of a dozen issues, they were ready to take on the US government. All from that tiny 2 square mile plot of land east of Lubbock, Texas.

With the computers back on line and the information flowing from all around the world into the computer room in the fancy new shelter, Bob, Don and Paul were able to get the latest intelligence estimates and military plans for the countries around the world and feed them to DJ. They had a bit of a problem getting their satellite feeds back up so they bought a satellite and ground station from the Christian Radio/TV Network who owned it. The satellite didn’t care where the ground station was located, so they’d dismantled the ground station and moved it to the ranch as well. And then the information began to flow.

It wouldn’t be fair to describe what follows as a revolution. It was more of a Civil War. Although the direct causes of the Civil War were different from those of the American

Revolution, they were both caused by the differences in politics, economies, and social structures between each region. Rebellion in each of the wars was caused by people feeling that their government didn't represent their own interests. One of the causes of the American Revolution was the growing gap between the social structures of the colonies and Britain. Britain had a strict social structure where it was almost impossible to get an opportunity to rise into a higher class. The aristocrats of Britain looked down on the simplistic ways of the American colonists, who valued self-reliance, equality, and opportunity. The colonies also had many differences between themselves. Even before the American Revolution, the lifestyles of the colonies were distinct from region to region. One of the main causes of these differences was the institution of slavery. In the southern states, social structure was generally rigid, while in the North, the industrial revolution was taking place, creating opportunities for almost any hard-working American man to raise his social status.

TIME OUT! Have you read Henry Kissinger's article in the November 8, 2004 issue of Newsweek? "As these lines are being written, the election process is still in full swing. But this week, barring another deadlocked outcome, the campaign that has mesmerized America will be over. What will remain are the challenges that gave rise to this occasionally frenzied battle and the responsibility of dealing with them. No president has faced an agenda of comparable scope. This is not hyperbole; it is the hand history has dealt this generation. Never before has it been necessary to conduct a war with neither front lines nor geographic definition and, at the same time, to rebuild fundamental principles of world order to replace the traditional ones which went up in the smoke of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon."

I read the article for the first time today, January 12, 2005. I suggest you find it and read it; it will make the more subtle points of this tale more understandable. I'm not a Newsweek fan, but the article was very interesting. Especially if you think this entire story is a little too fantastic.

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